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Aquarium's no place for whales, mayor says

Park-board chair set to seek report on issue

PAGE 3

A TALE OF TWO NEWCOMERS

DAY 4 OF METRO'S LOOK AT IMMIGRATION: THE CHALLENGES AND THE REWARDS OF COMING TO CANADA PAGE 8

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Captain Canuck at the helm

NHL. Vancouver hopes Linden can help turn the tide as president of hockey operations

CAM TUCKER
cam.tucker@metronews.ca

Newly minted Vancouver Canucks president Trevor Linden poses with team owner Francesco Aquilini during a press conference at Rogers Arena on Wednesday. More coverage, page 38. MATT DESOUZA/FOR METRO

A new Trevor Linden era has officially begun for the Vancouver Canucks, as the team closes out a disastrous season only three years removed from an appearance in the Stanley Cup final.

The Canucks named Linden their new president of hockey operations on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, the club announced that Mike Gillis had been relieved of his duties as president and general manager. He was fired the day after the team was officially eliminated from playoff contention amid a swoon that's been ongoing since January.

The franchise is now in a massive state of change.

Linden is arguably the most popular player to ever don a Canucks jersey. His No. 16 is retired in the rafters at Rogers Arena.

He was Vancouver's second overall pick in the 1988 NHL draft, and he captained the team to Game 7 of the 1994 Stanley Cup final.

"It's a new career path. It's a new life, if you will," said Linden during a press conference at Rogers Arena.

His most immediate task will be to hire a new general manager, preferably by early June before the NHL draft.

The search will include potential candidates from within the organization.

The Canucks' current coaching staff is also a hot topic of discussion. Will John Tortorella, in his first season with the team, retain his job for next season?

"The timing of this allows me to fully evaluate the coaching staff," said Linden, adding he only met Tortorella for the first time Wednesday morning.

The hiring of Linden comes from a business perspective, too. The team's reputation for skilled, puck-possession hockey has been tarnished over the last few months.

Wednesday was the deadline for season-ticket renewals, but that has been pushed back.

Francesco Aquilini, chairman of Canucks Sports and Entertainment, didn't get into specifics about how season-ticket renewals are faring, though there is speculation they aren't going well.

Bringing Linden back could help temporarily smooth over the club's rocky relationship with some fans.

"Trevor now is going to put together a winning plan, a winning organization that will ultimately bring (the Stanley Cup) to Vancouver," said Aquilini.

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Mayor asks aquarium to stop keeping whales and dolphins

Captivity. Aquarium responds by suggesting that Robertson may not grasp their importance to conservation efforts

SAM SMITH
vancouver@metronews.ca

The mayor of Vancouver has come out against the keeping of whales in captivity at the Vancouver Aquarium.

"My personal view is that the Vancouver Aquarium should begin to phase out the holding of whales and dolphins in captivity," said Gregor Robertson in an emailed statement.

"I'm hopeful that the aquarium and the Park Board can work collaboratively and come to an agreement on how to achieve this with a dialogue and review that will be informed, thoughtful and inclusive."

Robertson does not, however, support a referendum on the issue, as the ability to phase out the keeping of whales and dolphins is within the Park Board's authority, he said.

He also added the Vancouver Aquarium does incredible work in conservation and ocean research and plays a crucial role in educating the public about the importance of protecting local waters and the marine environment.

Vision Park Board Chair Aaron Jasper is also set to ask staff for a public report on cetaceans in captivity, best practices around the world, the Vancouver Aquarium's work with cetaceans and current agreements between the Park Board and aquarium.

"The Vancouver Aquarium is a huge draw for Stanley Park and provides exceptional educational programming on our marine systems for people of all ages," Jasper said. "The issue of cetaceans in captivity is an emotional one for many people."

It's about getting all the information together in one place and working with the aquarium on a collaborative strategy to move forward, Jasper added.

A man watches a newborn calf swim with her mother and grandmother at the Vancouver Aquarium. METRO FILE

The Vancouver Aquarium responded to Mayor Robertson, stating they were disappointed he didn't reach out to them first before issuing a statement and that he might not fully understand the important role belugas and dolphins play in their conservation efforts.

"Dolphins and belugas at Vancouver Aquarium play a direct and vital role in engaging people in key ocean issues," the Vancouver Aquarium said in an emailed statement.

"In addition, with the rapid environmental changes in the Arctic where belugas live, continued research, much of which must be done in marine science centres like the Vancouver Aquarium, is critical to their future."

Can't surf the waves? At least surf the web

Park board commissioner Trevor Loke wants to identify spots, like Kits Beach, for free Wi-Fi. EMILY JACKSON/METRO FILE

Wouldn't it be nice to use free Wi-Fi instead of pricey cellular data when posting Instagram pics of the sun setting over the ocean at Kits Beach?

Vancouver's park board figures that residents and tourists would appreciate the option.

It will vote on a motion next week asking staff to determine potential locations for free public Wi-Fi, the cost of such a program and a timeline for implementing the service, Commissioner Trevor Loke announced Wednesday.

The city has been mulling free public Wi-Fi since at least 2005 — it's already in place at city hall and at the public library — and council passed a digital strategy last year promising to make free Internet access a reality by 2016.

But Loke wants to get the ball rolling on the plan to ensure the park board has a say in which places get Wi-Fi. Suggestions so far have focused on busy downtown shopping strips including Granville Street.

"We want to make sure that park spaces are a priority within the digital strategy," Loke said.

It's not clear how much Wi-Fi infrastructure will cost, but the city is considering partnerships with local providers. The entire digital strategy was budgeted at $30 million between 2013 and 2017.

EMILY JACKSON/METRO

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City to nip tree chopping on private property in the bud

Branching out. City wants to create the world's 'most spectacular' urban forest

EMILY JACKSON
emily.jackson@metronews.ca

Tree blocking your view? Too bad.

Chopping down mature trees on private property in Vancouver could soon get a whole lot harder.

City council will vote next week on a proposal to saw off the section of a bylaw that allows owners to remove one healthy tree from their property each year, regardless of the reason.

Since the bylaw was created in 1996, it has cast a shadow over Vancouver's urban canopy, city staff stated in a report released Wednesday.

Between its introduction and 2013, 47 per cent of the trees felled in the city were healthy.

That's 23,492 trees that the city believes didn't have to die as it vies to create the world's "most spectacular" urban forest and plant 150,000 new trees by 2020.

Trees help mitigate climate change, clean the air, stabilize the soil, manage storm water retention, increase property values and improve citizens' health and well-being.

Under the new rules, property owners will only be allowed to cut down a tree if it's diseased, dying or hazardous. Hazards include being too close to utility wires or being within a building envelope.

To do so, they must file an application to be reviewed by a city inspector. Site visits to check on the tree (and if the owner planted a replacement tree) will be conducted, and an arborist report will be required.

Obviously, the extra inspections and paperwork will be more expensive. If city council approves, the bylaw changes will cost about $140,000 in 2014 and $285,000 in 2015.

Trees

23,492

Since the bylaw was created in 1996, 47 per cent of the trees felled in the city were healthy. That's 23,492 trees that the city believes didn't have to die.

A holly tree nestled beside a house in Vancouver's Mt. Pleasant. EMILY JACKSON/METRO

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Star-studded lineup for reborn music fest

Pemberton. Outkast, Nine Inch Nails and Soundgarden scheduled to perform

SAM SMITH
vancouver@metronews.ca

It's official: The Pemberton Music Festival is on, and this year's lineup includes more than 100 performances on two main stages, two secondary stages, a dance tent and a comedy area.

Kendrick Lamar, Outkast, Nine Inch Nails, TV on the Radio, Lauryn Hill and Soundgarden are but a few scheduled on the deep roster for the fest, to take place from July 18 to 20.

On the comedy stage, stand-up acts include the Trailer Park Boys, Nick Swardson, Tom Green, Norm Macdonald and Hannibal Buress.

The lineup was expected on Tuesday, but HUKA Entertainment co-founder and CEO A.J. Niland said they needed the extra time to piece everything together.

"It took a little longer than expected, but we wanted to make certain we put the best experience together, one that exemplifies the most beautiful festival site in the world," he said in a press release.

"With today's announcement, we are confident we have done exactly that. We appreciate all of the patience, goodwill and positive comments from our communities and supporters, and are excited for July to come, so everyone can see what we have in store for them at this one-of-a-kind event."

More acts are expected to be announced in the coming weeks.

The music festival runs from July 18 to 20, with ticket sales going up on Friday, starting at $279, plus a choice of camping or shuttle privileges for $89.

For more information, visit pembertonmusicfestival.com.

Wayne Coyne from the Flaming Lips gets up close to the crowd during the 2008 Pemberton Music Festival. METRO FILE

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'Puppy mill' breeder banned from owning pets for 20 years

A group of puppies rescued by the BC SPCA from Mel Gerling.
COURTESY OF BC SPCA

An Abbotsford "puppy mill" breeder has been banned for 20 years from owning animals and charged with two counts of animal cruelty after a BC SPCA investigation found 14 of his dogs living in horrid conditions.

Mel Gerling, who owned and operated the Puppy Paradise storefront in Surrey, had 14 dogs seized from his kennel made up of Shih Tzus, chihuahuas and pugs and terrier crosses."We are extremely pleased with this sentence because the ban means he will no longer be able to operate substandard breeding operations that inflict suffering on animals," said Marcie Moriarty, chief prevention and enforcement officer with the BC SPCA.

"If you define a puppy mill as a place where dogs are repetitively bred for profit with little or no regard for their well-being, then this man was operating puppy mills."

Many of the dogs were found to have luxating patella (floating kneecaps), inadequate shelter, badly matted fur and many suffered from a host of untreated medical conditions, Moriarty said.

Puppy Paradise has since been shut down.

The case is being pointed to by Moriarty as another reason people should research where they're getting their animals from.

"Unfortunately individuals like Mel Gerling prey on people who don't take the time to research whether or not they are dealing with a reputable breeder," she said.

"People see a cute puppy online or in a pet store and make an impulse purchase without any information about the puppy's genetics, the parent's medical history or the conditions under which they were bred.

"I think people would be appalled if they knew the veterinary bills they were about to take on and about the cruel conditions to which the breeding dogs are subjected."

To report animal cruelty cases, contact the Animal Cruelty Reporting Hotline at 1-855-622-7722.

SAM SMITH/FOR METRO

Fire chief awarded Medal of Bravery

Vancouver Island. Paul Hurst honoured for saving girl from raging house fire

View Royal Fire Chief Paul Hurst has been awarded the rare Medal of Bravery for his courageous actions after he pulled an unconscious nine-year-old girl from a raging house fire and gave her CPR before the ambulance arrived.

Just before 3 a.m. in March 2013, the View Royal Fire Department in the Greater Victoria area received a call. The word was three people were trapped inside a burning home. Then the call was abruptly cut off.

"On our arrival we found the grandmother unconscious on the front lawn," Hurst said. "The great-grandmother was said to be in the basement, and the child was somewhere on the main floor."

After sending most of his team, 23 in total, to the basement, Hurst was left commanding the scene from the front of the house.

But as the fire raged on, he and Assistant Fire Chief John Chow decided to knock down the front door for ventilation, and that's when they saw the girl lying on the ground.

Without time to get his gear, Hurst took a deep breath and ran inside.

"She was lodged behind a door and under some furniture, so I made three attempts before I could grab her," he said.

Once he had the girl, Katrina Van Winkle, and brought her outside, he found she was going into cardiac arrest from breathing in the toxic fumes from the fire. Hurst maintained CPR until the ambulance could arrive and she was quickly flown out to BC Children's Hospital in Vancouver.

"Everyone recovered," Hurst said. "The whole family."

Hurst says it's humbling to receive the Medal of Bravery, but it wasn't he alone that did the work. SAM SMITH/FOR METRO

Katrina Van Winkel, 9, hugs View Royal Fire Chief Paul Hurst after he received the Medal of Bravery on Tuesday. CONTRIBUTED

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Crime. Routine traffic stop leads to gun bust

A routine traffic stop by Vancouver police in the downtown area last week has led to the arrest of one man and the seizure of multiple guns.

On April 5 at around 11 p.m. at the intersection of Thurlow and Hastings, police pulled over a man for a traffic violation.

After noticing that the man was sweating profusely and extremely nervous, police noticed two loaded handguns strapped on him in shoulder holsters.

Along with the two handguns, a rifle and shotgun were also located in the vehicle.

Further investigation into the man's West End apartment by the VPD gang crime unit also led to the seizure of two more shotguns, three assault rifles and a replica Uzi.

Vancouver resident Alexander Bell, 45, has been arrested and charged with multiple firearms offences.

MATT DESOUZA/FOR METRO

Inspector Scott Thompson and Const. Brian Montague stand next to photos of guns seized during a routine traffic stop. MATT DESOUZA/METRO

Murder trial

B.C. gang leader most significant witness: Defence

Defence lawyers at a high-profile murder trial in Vancouver have asked for more time to prepare to cross examine a former gang leader, saying he is the most significant witness in the case.

Michael Le, who pleaded guilty last year to conspiracy after signing an agreement with the Crown, testified this week against Matthew Johnston and Cody Haevischer.

The two men are accused of first-degree murder in the deaths of six people, including two innocent bystanders. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Brief leave?

Kwan back after audit scandal

Vancouver New Democrat Jenny Kwan says she dipped into two personal lines of credit to pay $35,000 for family trips to Disneyland and Europe originally billed to a Downtown Eastside non-profit society that helps vulnerable people. Kwan is back from an unpaid leave she took after government audits revealed financial irregularities at the Portland Hotel Society, including lavish travel expenses. Kwan says she believed her former husband Dan Small covered the travel expenses for herself and their two children, but audits reveal the society covered the costs. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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See that symbol? It means you can scan this image with your Metro News app to see a video clip featuring more immigrants who've made Canada home.

Priscilla Bunke, originally from Nigeria, lived in Germany for 11 years before moving to Canada. She's now a successful specialist in securities and derivatives regulatory law, as well as the energy and oil industries. CONTRIBUTED

Jamie Martinez moved to Canada from Colombia in January 2008. He spent years working as a labourer in Canada and has been forced to tap into the welfare system. MIKE DONACHIE/METRO

The Story of Us
Immigration in Canada

MIKE DONACHIE
Metro in London, Ont.

Priscilla Bunke has come a long way, in more ways than one.

Her route to Canada was via Germany, where she spent 11 years. She then worked through a process of re-qualifying as a lawyer in Alberta, completing that in May 2012.

It's been 18 years since Bunke left her native Nigeria, and she's now a successful specialist in securities and derivatives regulatory law, as well as the energy and oil industries, with Dentons law firm in Calgary.

If that sounds impressive, it's because it is.

"It wasn't easy," she said. "But many people come here and succeed."

She's done a lot of work in the last 11 years, including 12 exams just to re-qualify in Canada.

"I wouldn't lie," said Bunke, 45, who has a 14-year-old son and an 11-year-old daughter. "Life is very good now. I'm very happy now. But it was tough."

She said working in Germany — where she completed a master's degree and worked as a corporate counsel for an insurance company — was tougher, mainly due to the language barrier.

In Canada, Bunke was able to find work quickly, spending three years as a legal researcher while she re-qualified.

But adjusting to Canada after she arrived in July 2007 brought its own challenges.

There's a greater emphasis on networking, she explained, and the lessons come thick and fast.

"What I've realized here is that if you are open to learning, then people are really, really kind and ready to help," Bunke said, adding that she values the Canadian mentors who offered their time.

"I've been very fortunate and blessed to meet people who have been amazing."

It's been a tough few years for Jamie Martinez.

Now 54, he came to Canada from Colombia in January 2008.

"My original background is mechanical engineering," Martinez said. "But I worked for Goodyear in Colombia for 17 years in human resources. I wanted to do something the same when I came to Canada, but I couldn't."

First, there was a language barrier.

Two ESL courses helped with that, but even applying for jobs was a problem, so there followed lessons in creating a resumé and looking for work.

Martinez spent years being offered only labourer jobs, and he's also been forced to tap into the welfare system. But he stayed determined to work in administration, in a similar job to the one he had in Colombia.

It took three years before he landed an office job, and he says his experience isn't rare — even the large numbers of university-educated immigrants face a steep climb, he said.

Martinez, who is in the country on a work visa and still trying, after six years, to get permanent resident status, says he's committed to Canada.

Nowadays, he works as executive director of the Latino Canadian Community Corporation in London, Ont., and is a leading light in the London Multicultural Club.

"Canada is amazing," he said.

"We love Canada. It's so family-oriented."

But he called on employers to be more open to newcomers, whose status is easily signalled with a SIN card number that starts with "9."

"We don't get real help to get a job," he said about immigrants.

"We need more help to overcome all the problems we have."

MIKE DONACHIE/METRO IN LONDON, ONT.

Follow Mike Donachie on Twitter @Mike_Donachie

Quoted

"We need more help to overcome all the problems we have."

Jamie Martinez

A truly Canadian quiz

The Canadian citizenship test was altered in 2010 to make it a little more difficult.

Since then, applicants have been required to answer 15 of 20 questions correctly, whereas previously they passed with 12 out of 20 correct responses — as long as they gave the right answer to certain mandatory questions.

The problem was those mandatory questions were always the same, making the test easy to beat by paying for the answers beforehand. (And, it's been proven that really was happening).

About 96 per cent of those taking the test before 2010 passed. The new formula has lowered the pass rate to 80 per cent or so.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) sends all applicants a study guide as soon as the paperwork is received.

"The best way to succeed at the citizenship test is to study Discover Canada," said a CIC official. "We encourage people to begin studying as soon as they apply for citizenship and receive their study guide."

As well, an online language test must be taken and passed before anything else happens.

SCOTT TAYLOR/METRO IN LONDON, ONT.

On the web

Can you pass? Give our practice citizenship test a try at metronews.ca

Getting their start elsewhere

Plenty of immigrants come to Canada and wind up being household names. You may be surprised at how many well-known Canucks didn't actually get a start in the True North strong and free. Here's a look:

Steve Nash
GETTY IMAGES

Steve Nash is considered the best NBA player ever to spend most of his life in Canada. Currently a member of the Los Angeles Lakers, he was named the NBA's most valuable player in both 2006 and 2007. He grew up in Victoria, B.C. He was born in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Ernie Coombs
GETTY IMAGES

Ernie Coombs was a children's entertainer who starred in the Canadian television series, Mr. Dressup. He became a Canadian citizen in 1994. He and his family lived in Pickering, Ont. He was born in Lewiston, Maine.

Brendan Fraser
GETTY IMAGES

Brendan Fraser, son of Canadian parents, is a movie and stage actor who portrayed Rick O'Connell in the three-part Mummy series. He is also known for other comedic and fantasy-film leading roles in major Hollywood movies. He was born in Indianapolis, Ind.

METRO

THE STORY OF US: IMMIGRATION IN CANADA, TOLD IN FIVE PARTS

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Day 3 3
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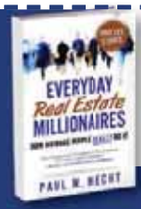

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Man arrested after stabbing rampage at Toronto office

Attempted murder charges. Police say suspect had just been fired when he attacked, leaving four injured

Toronto police stand outside an office building in the city's north end following a multiple stabbing. Police say a suspect is in custody following the stabbing, which left at least four people injured. NATHAN DENETTE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

An employee of a human resources company stabbed his superiors while being fired at a Toronto office building, police said Wednesday.

Police said four people were injured, including one woman who has life-threatening injuries.

Chuang Li, 47, faces three counts of attempted murder and four counts of aggravated assault with a knife.

Dan Darnbrough, a Toronto police detective, said employees held the man before police arrived. A 32-year-old woman and three men between the ages of 35 and 45 were injured, he said. Three remain hospitalized.

Ceridian, a global payroll and human resources company based in Bloomington, Minnesota, said four of its employees were attacked by a "former employee." Asked if the man attacked after being fired, Ceridian released a statement that said "due to employee confidentiality guidelines, we are unable to share any additional information."

Quoted

"He was being fired and I guess then he proceeded to get involved in stabbing some of his bosses and some other employees."

Toronto police Det. Daniel Darnbrough

Police earlier said they were called at about 9:30 a.m. local time with reports that "a man with scissors" had entered the business and began stabbing people.

Television footage showed police putting a handcuffed man, wearing a bloodied shirt, into a police car. The man turned his head while in the backseat and said hello to a TV camera pointed at him.

The man is due in court on Thursday. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Graphic photo causes stir at Pistorius trial

Oscar Pistorius leaves the high court in Pretoria, South Africa, Wednesday.
THEMBA HADEBE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Prosecutor takes aggressive line.
Accused Olympian refuses to look at image of slain girlfriend's bloodied head

Oscar Pistorius refused to look at a photo of his dead girlfriend's bloody head wounds while testifying at his murder trial Wednesday as the prosecutor urged the star athlete to "take responsibility" for killing her.

"It's time that you look at it," chief prosecutor Gerrie Nel said, setting the stage for a rigorous first day of cross-examination of Pistorius, the double-amputee Olympian charged with premeditated murder for shooting Reeva Steenkamp three times through a toilet door at his home.

"I remember," Pistorius said of Steenkamp's bloodied head, becoming distraught and then crying as he turned away from the gruesome image of the injuries he inflicted that were displayed next to him in a packed courtroom in South Africa's capital.

The showing of the photograph on TV screens in the courtroom caused gasps among spectators, who included Steenkamp's mother, June.

"I will not look at a picture where I'm tormented by what I saw and felt that night," Pistorius said. "As I picked Reeva up, my fingers touched her head. I remember. I don't have to look at a picture, I was there."

Pistorius, 27, says he shot Steenkamp in the pre-dawn hours on Valentine's Day — in the head, arm and hip — by mistake, thinking she was a dangerous intruder behind the door in his bathroom about to come out and attack him. Prosecutors charge he killed the 29-year-old intentionally.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

'Cuban Twitter.' Havana probes leak of half-million cellphone numbers

Cuba's government said Wednesday it has launched a probe into how hundreds of thousands of customer cellphone numbers fell into the hands of a U.S. government program that used them to secretly set up a mobile-based, Twitter-like social network on the island.

An Associated Press investigation revealed last week that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) program used the data to build a subscriber base for the platform, dubbed ZunZuneo, with the idea that it could be used to stir unrest.

Cuba considers such USAID programs to be subversive attempts to topple its Communist-run government. Officials told reporters that state telecom Etecsa had not provided the data to any international operator or entity, and that the information was obtained illegally.

Washington officials have defended the ZunZuneo program as consistent with U.S. law and described it as "discreet," rather than covert or classified. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pakistan

Attempted murder case against baby prompts outcry

A nine-month-old Pakistani boy has been swept up in an attempted murder investigation that highlights the country's dysfunctional criminal justice system where even children are not immune from questionable legal decisions.

The toddler was brought to court last Friday as part of an investigation relating to an incident where residents in his neighbourhood clashed with police. He was granted bail by a judge.

The Jan. 31 altercation sparked police to open an attempted murder investigation into 30 people, including the father of the toddler and his unnamed son, said police officer Atif Zulfiqar, who is in charge of the area. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Wounded by trains

Honduran migrants ask Mexico to allow free passage

About a dozen Honduran migrants who lost legs and arms after falling from trains during northbound journeys across Mexico asked the country's Senate on Tuesday to stop the government's persecution of Central Americans, protect them from criminal gangs and contribute money to shelters for their care.

The migrants say that drug gang members and other criminals frequently beat, stab or push them from moving trains during their journeys through Mexico to the United States.

The migrants expressed hope that Mexico would agree to allow them transit visas or free passage without documents to cross the country on their way to the U.S. border.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Ontario's infamous 'Bathtub Girls' have their story told on big screen

Perfect Sisters. New film is based on the case of two sisters who drowned their mother in a bathtub in 2003

Georgie Henley, left, and Abigail Breslin star in the movie Perfect Sisters, about two teenage girls who murder their mother by drowning her in their bathtub. The movie, opening April 11 in select cities, is based on a true story from Mississauga, Ont., of two sisters who were convicted of first-degree murder. THE CANADIAN PRESS/CONTRIBUTED

One of two Ontario sisters who drowned their alcoholic mother when they were teenagers and almost got away with it has made an unlikely transition from murder to law school, a new film reveals.

The sordid tale of the so-called Bathtub Girls — who were convicted of first-degree murder in the 2003 death of their mother in Mississauga, Ont. — is now the subject of the movie Perfect Sisters.

The film, opening Friday in select cities, notes that both girls are now in university — one of them in law school — and focuses on what led two young girls to murder their mother.

Filmed in Winnipeg, the movie stars Abigail Breslin, known for Little Miss Sunshine, and Georgie Henley, known for the Chronicles of Narnia series. It's based on the book by former Toronto Star reporter Bob Mitchell, The Class Project: How to Kill a Mother: The True Story of Canada's Infamous Bathtub Girls.

The movie, however, takes a markedly different perspective than the book.

Director Stan Brooks says he was determined for the story to be as accurate as possible to the real events and fictionalized almost nothing. But the story is portrayed through a far more sympathetic lens than Mitchell's book.

"It wasn't so simple as to say, 'These were sociopathic girls. They were just evil,'" Brooks said in an interview.

"I see how teens can make bad decisions in bad situations. I, as a parent myself, I'm much more cognizant of what might have taken place that got them there, without condoning what they did."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

High steaks. Calgary police beefing up efforts to corral meat thieves

Police say a man accused in a dangerous high-speed drive through Calgary, speeding the wrong way down one-way streets before crashing into a fence, may be involved in a meat-theft ring.

Police investigators say supermarket meat is a prime target for thieves, and a sophisticated crime ring is being fuelled by rising food costs.

It's enough of a problem that police have a dedicated unit working to stop the trend.

Const. Lara Sampson says the stolen food is often exchanged for as little as 30 cents on the dollar, or for drugs, and some ends up in restaurants.

"We have them being sold out of the back of vehicles, we have them kept in dirty old garages," Sampson said. "It is very common in Calgary right now."

Gary Neil Firth, 49, faces numerous charges.

THE CANADIAN PRESS/GLOBAL CALGARY

New York

Paralyzed worker sues rail company for $100 million

A railroad mechanic paralyzed in a deadly New York derailment says he forgives the man driving the train.

Samuel Rivera praised Metro-North Railroad on Wednesday as he announced a $100-million lawsuit against it.

Rivera spoke from a rehabilitation centre north of New York City. He has no movement of his legs and very little in his arms.

Four people were killed and more than 70 injured in the Dec. 1 derailment in the Bronx. Rivera is calling for legislation mandating seat belts on public transportation. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Plunket's princely play date

Britain's Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge, holds Prince George, left, during a visit to Plunket nurse and parents group on Wednesday at Government House in Wellington, New Zealand. Plunket is a not-for-profit organization providing care for children and families. MARTY MELVILLE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Airport scare

Man found with loaded handgun

A Virginia man was arrested at Baltimore-Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport after a loaded handgun was found in his bag at a security checkpoint.

Maryland Transportation Authority Police say 36-year-old Ryan Watson of Stafford, Va., was charged.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Infertility

Italian court lifts ban on donations

Italy's constitutional court has struck down a ban on egg or sperm donation for infertile couples.

Health Minister Beatrice Lorenzin, saying the law had effectively been "gutted," called on Parliament to revise legislation.

The conservative law reflects the influence on lawmakers by the Vatican, whose teaching forbids artificial procreation.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Make it so. Around the world in 20 (flying) days via souped-up solar plane

A Swiss team planning to complete the first round-the-world solar flight next year unveiled a new version of their unique aircraft Wednesday, which they say could remain in the air indefinitely.

Pilots Bertrand Piccard and André Borschberg said the Solar Impulse 2 improves upon the single-seater prototype that first took flight five years ago, and which has since demonstrated that a solar-powered plane can fly through the night, between two continents and across the United States.

The updated plane, presented to the world at the Payerne Air Force Base in Switzerland, has better batteries for storing energy soaked up from the sun by the 7,200 solar cells that cover its massive wings.

At 236 feet, its wingspan is eight metres longer than the first prototype — longer even than the wings of a Boeing 747 jumbo jet — but still only weights 2.54 tons, about as much as a large car.

The materials in the updated plane are also lighter than before, it has more efficient electric motors and a "good business class seat," Borschberg said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

'Heartbleed' bug causes major heartburn for CRA

Canada Revenue Agency. If you haven't filed your taxes, you won't be able to until at least the weekend due to computer bug

With tax-return season in full swing, the Canada Revenue Agency suddenly locked down its online filing services on Wednesday, fearful of a new vulnerability in software used by much of the world to safeguard secure websites on the Internet.

All of the federal government's online systems were under review after word of the so-called Heartbleed computer bug prompted the tax agency to pull the plug on its electronic services as a precaution.

"As a preventative measure, the CRA has temporarily shut down public access to our online services to safeguard the integrity of the information we hold," the agency said in a statement.

The shutdown came after the Canadian Cyber Incident Response Centre (CCIRC) issued a warning to system administrators about the coding flaw. It recommended that system operators unable to plug in an immediate fix get off the grid. THE CANADIAN PRESS

The Canada Revenue Agency headquarters in Ottawa is shown in 2011. The "Heartbleed" bug forced the tax agency to suspend its online filing services Wednesday. SEAN KILPATRICK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Heart-stopping oversight

Bug went undetected for two years

The "Heartbleed" computer bug is causing major security headaches across the Internet as websites scramble to fix the problem and Web surfers wonder if they should change their passwords to prevent theft of email accounts, credit card numbers and other info.

Researchers who uncovered the threat are worried about the lapse because it went undetected for more than two years.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Serving up McJobs

McD's Canada supersizes hiring of young people

McDonald's Canada and its franchisees are set to hire more than 6,000 young people at a one-day event on Thursday. Currently, 75 per cent of McDonald Canada employees are between the ages of 15 and 24.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

More focus on the self

Twitter redesigns for the Selfie Age

As Twitter looks to broaden its appeal beyond its 241 million users, the company is introducing a redesign of profile pages that includes bigger photos, more user controls and a distinct resemblance to Facebook.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Half a million in Canada

Toyota recalls 6.39M vehicles

Toyota Motor Corp. is recalling 6.39 million vehicles globally, including more than half a million in Canada, for a variety of problems spanning nearly 30 models in Japan, North America, Europe and elsewhere.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Market Minute

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GIVE UP YOUR SUMMER JOB SEARCH

HE SAYS

John Mazerolle
metronews.ca

Now that summer break has arrived for you university and college students, it's time to decide what your dream job is, because you'll be thinking about it a lot while you rot in some summer-job cesspool.

That's probably hard to hear after eight difficult months of alcoholism and plagiarism, but it's the truth, as cold and hard as the nickels you'll be stealing from the tip jar.

One of the only guaranteed jobs out there this time of year is writing tips for people looking for summer jobs (ka-ching!), and in my experience most articles like this one are far too optimistic, even naive.

They're all about networking and gumption and stick-to-it-iveness (formerly known as perseverance). Just put yourself out there and good things will happen, the advice goes. Lies, I say.

It harkens back to my parents' youth in New Brunswick, where job seekers simply grabbed the "Help Wanted" sign in the window and handed it to the boss, who was so impressed by an N.B.er with basic literacy skills and opposable thumbs that the new hires were well on their way to becoming Senior Vice-President of "Help Wanted" Sign Distribution. Or so I've been told.

But when I was playing this game 15 years ago, it was pretty painful. Mostly it involved looking at recipe cards tacked to a corkboard at a youth employment centre and praying that "pay negotiable" meant either six figures or seven figures.

I'm ignorant of today's job market — no doubt it involves e-recipe cards robo-tacked to a World Wide Corkboard — but since the media has dubbed today's youth demographic "generation screwed" I'm going to assume things aren't super.

From what I've heard, the modern job seeker requires three call-back interviews, including one in front of a board of directors, just to apprentice for the guy who fetches the coffee, and even then it's an unpaid internship until you're 34.

It's pretty much hopeless. But I'm legally obligated to provide a few tips, so:

- It's not what you do, it's who you do.
- Crack the so-called hidden job market by surfing to the Canada Job Bank and typing up up down down left right left right B A.
- BuzzFeed's Which Career Should You REALLY Have? is pretty much can't-miss.

But the biggest advice I would give anyone looking for a summer job is: Avoid it if you can.

I'm not even kidding. If you can avoid it at all — either because you're spoiled or you're cheap — then do it. Working in between school years makes the whole summer seem like life's longest Sunday: melancholy and muted even when it's nice out.

I know that supposedly makes me irresponsible then and now, but, trust me, you will not look back and say, "I wish I'd joined the workforce sooner."

Instead, inform your friends that you're looking to travel or party or vegetate and that they should join you. "Help wanted," in other words.

ZOOM

It's rather en-lightning

COURTESY CRAIG ECCLES/SOLENT NEWS & PHOTO

Electrical storms get oohs and ahhs

A thrill-seeking storm chaser captured the precise moment these giant lightning bolts lit up dark skies in a series of incredible storms.

Craig Eccles, a photographer from Perth, Western Australia, travels up to 500 kilometres in anticipation of a powerful storm – all for the sake of capturing that ferocious majesty on camera.

METRO

Photog's viewpoint

"I have seen lightning bolts stretch for miles across the sky. For me, it's not all about the lightning bolt — sometimes it's about being in pitch black and in a split second, it appears as day."

Craig Eccles, photographer from Perth, Western Australia

How and when?

- Electrical potential builds up inside clouds, between water droplets with either a positive and negative charge. This potential is discharged in the form of lightning
- The frequency of flashes worldwide is about 50 times per second (that's 4.3 million times a day).

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MetroTube

One cat not a fan

ANDREW FIFIELD
metronews.ca

Much of the feisty behaviour we find so amusing about cats can be attributed to their displeasure for treading on their turf or ignoring their critically important needs.

"You think you can ignore my hunger at 5 a.m.? My raking at this blanket begs to differ."

This cat goes from fuzzy guitar groupie to feisty heckler based on a similar complaint. "Listen, Duane Allman. I'm in charge of licks around here."

Luckily, lame puns and their accompanying groans are for humans only. Or I'd be in a lot of trouble with my cat today.

FLICKR

metro

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SCENE 2

Play's got 99 problems but the Bard ain't one

The Bomb-itty of Errors. 'Ad-rap-tation' adds some street flavour to Elizabethan flow

BACKSTAGE PASS
Graeme McRanor
vancouver@metronews.ca

To rap or not to rap: that is the question.

If you're like me, you've been sitting around at home waiting for someone to do a rap adaptation — an "ad-raptation," as it were — of one of Shakespeare's plays.

Well, we shall wait no more. It's called The Bomb-itty of Errors and, if you're at all familiar with MC Bard's oeuvre, then you've probably already figured out it's based on The Comedy of Errors. Of course, in this version, the actors add some street flavour to that oft-impenetrable Elizabethan flow.

And there's a DJ.

But check it — it's got some real theatre cred, yo. Originally produced here in Vancouver by Twenty Something Theatre, it was first performed off-Broadway in New York. It's also played Chicago, Philadelphia, London and Amsterdam.

The Bomb-itty of Errors, a rap adaptation of Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors, opens tonight at the Revue Stage at Granville Island Arts Club. CONTRIBUTED

The Bomb-itty of Errors stars Brian Cochrane, David Kaye, Niko Koupantsis, Jameson Parker and DJ Oker Chen. It starts tonight and runs until May 10 at the Revue Stage on Granville Island. More information at artsclub.com.

Just announced

54-40 is playing the Commodore Oct. 11. Man, those dudes have been at it awhile now. Tickets $32.50 — on sale tomorrow at 10 a.m. via Ticketmaster.

Sex after kids?

Is it possible to have a sex life after kids? Is it even worth it? Those are the philosophical questions posed by the Canadian comedy Sex After Kids, which plays at the VIFF Vancity Theatre from tomorrow until April 16. If you have parents, or want to be one, check this film out.

Also playing from April 11 to 14 is Berlin International Film Festival official selection Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons (Cantonese with English subtitles).

And finally (April 11-19), it's Mistaken for Strangers, a documentary that Pitchfork called "the funniest, most meta music movie since Spinal Tap." It's about Matt Berninger, his band The National and his slacker brother, Tom, who made the movie after being invited to work as a roadie on the band's biggest tour to date. Visit viff.org for more information.

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See that symbol? It means you can scan this image with your Metro News app to see a video of the Trailer Park Boys telling you why you should watch their new film

Trailer Park Boys are still living the dream

Don't Legalize It.
Ricky, Julian and Bubbles are back and drunker than ever

LIZ BROWN
liz.brown@metronews.ca

As my photographer and I file into a suite at Toronto's Grand Hotel, we're hit with the stench of stale cigarettes and sweat-out liquor.

Bubbles horks a snot rocket before offering to shake hands with us. Ricky and Julian follow suit — sans loogie — and the trio settle into the overstuffed microsuede couch to talk about their upcoming movie, Don't Legalize It, the third feature film for the Trailer Park Boys.

Three movies and an enduring TV series (a new 10-episode season will debut on Netflix later this year) isn't too shabby an accomplishment for the trio from Dartmouth's Sunnyvale Trailer Park. But the boys don't let the success get to their heads. They're still living hard and while they were here for the Toronto premiere of Don't Legalize It, they made the most of their time in the big city.

"It's fantastic," Bubbles says when asked how he's liking Toronto.

"We like it," groans Julian behind a pair of dark aviators. "We were up late last night."

How late?

"Oh, about 7:30 a.m.," says Bubbles.

It's now noon and the sun is beating into the hotel room.

But Bubbles insists they were only drinking cherry colas. I should've been a better journalist and clarified — though I'm pretty sure he meant the type of colas made of spiced rum and amaretto.

Ricky has been silent so far, slouching on the far end of the couch, hiding behind a pair of sunglasses and looking slightly sweaty. But we want to hear from him — he's the real star of this film, after all, as he treks to Ottawa in a camper van to make an inspired speech about why it's a mistake to legalize dope.

He looks a little ashen but tries his best to articulate his arguments. "I think if they're going to legalize it, they should at least let the people who are growing and selling it like me keep doing their job," he says.

"There's enough unemployment. If they're going to legalize it, they should be doing it the right way; it shouldn't just be the government just taking all the money. Their dope is probably going to suck, you might not be able to get honey oil or hash any more, so I don't know if it's a good thing."

I think that's the best I'm going to get out of these still-drunk boys, so I wrap the interview.

But later that night, at the after-party, after the premiere of the film and a few downed cocktails, I see Ricky. I flip him the bird and tell him he has some off to f—k. "That was a terrible interview," I tell him. "Maybe the worst ever."

"What do you want from me? I was hungover as f—k?" he shoots back.

Fair enough.

As if to make amends, he invites me to do a shot. I oblige. Even after a decade, life is still good as a Trailer Park Boy.

Trailer Park Boys 3: Don't Legalize It, opens in theatres next Friday, April 18. LIZ BEDDALL/METRO

Quoted

"Their dope is probably going to suck, you might not be able to get honey oil or hash any more, so I don't know if it's a good thing."
Ricky on why we shouldn't legalize pot

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METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Tina Fey and Amy Poehler. ALL PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

Wish granted: Tina & Amy to star in sister comedy

How is it that we can put a man on the moon, but Amy Poehler and Tina Fey have only starred in one film together? And that film was Baby Mama? (Mean Girls doesn't count. They had supporting roles in that.) Luckily, things are about to change. According to the Hollywood Reporter, the stars of 30 Rock and Parks and Recreation will co-star in The Nest, a dark period thriller. Just kidding, it's a comedy, obviously. The Nest is about adult sisters (they're playing sisters!) who find out that their parents are selling their childhood home, so they decide to throw one last big party there. In the process, they learn to mature. The Nest will be directed by Jay Roach, who also directed Pitch Perfect. It's written by Paula Pell, a former Saturday Night Live writer who also played Pete's wife on 30 Rock.

After 27 years, Tom Ford and his partner have fashionably late nuptials

Fashion icon Tom Ford is officially off the market, as he and his partner of 27 years, former Vogue Hommes International editor Richard Buckley, recently tied the knot in a very quiet ceremony, according to Vogue. Ford let the news slip casually while speaking at the Regent Street Apple Store opening in London earlier this week. "We are now married, which is nice," Ford said. "I know that was just made legal in the U.K., which is great. We were married in the States."

Tom Ford

The Word

Gwynnie might need practice at conscious uncoupling

MELINDA TAUB
Metro World News in New York

Moses Martin, the son of Gwyneth Paltrow and Chris Martin, turned eight on Tuesday, and Gwyneth posted this sweet pic on Twitter for his birthday. Yeah, happy birthday, Moses — now run and play, because we need to talk to your mom about something.

Check out her hand in the photo. Despite her much publicized "conscious uncoupling" from Chris Martin, it appears that Gwyneth is still wearing her wedding ring. That's assuming this is a current photo, of course, which seems likely — Moses' "Aw, Mom" expression certainly looks like an eight-year-old boy to me.

So what do you think is the deal with the ring? I'd say maybe she's not ready to remove it, but I don't think Gwyneth Paltrow has ever shown that kind of emotional weakness in her life. And I say that with tremendous and earnest respect. She's an oil-pulling, hydrangea-stroking pillar of steel. No, the ring must be a deliberate step in her conscious uncoupling. Unless her conscious uncoupling has gone so well that she's already remarried to someone else.

Kate Mulgrew

Big Red in a new film that makes some big claims

Say it ain't so, Captain Janeway. Kate Mulgrew, who currently stars as Big Red on Orange Is the New Black, is part of a new movie about geocentrism — the belief that the sun orbits the Earth. Mulgrew, who also spent seven years playing a starship captain on Star Trek: Voyager, narrates The Principle by ultra-conservative Robert Sungenis, who maintains the blog Galileo Was Wrong. So is Mulgrew a devotee of Sungenis' extremely bogus theory? Unclear. She does say that "everything we think we know about our universe is wrong" in the trailer, though apparently not everyone who was in that trailer chose to be there. On second thought, let's hope she really does buy into geocentrism, because that would probably break new ground in the realm of weird celebrity beliefs.

Twitter

@TheRock
Alright.. 3 hrs sleep, but kickin' jet lag's ass. Its time to work.. Good morning from lovely London.

@ladygaga
just basically ate all the birthday cake I was supposed to eat last week but had shows so I dieted it was so good. it was yummy yums

@WhitneyCummings
People: please make your emails funnier in general

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SHOPPERS DRUG MART

Spring clean your style

Won't you let them live?! In the spirit of reducing, reusing and recycling, we look at three ways to deal with your done-for duds this spring without tossing them in the trash

ELIZABETH BEDDALL
elizabeth.beddall
@metronews.ca

Perfectly distressed denim jeans, how I've loved you so, but it's time to let you go. ISTOCK

Whether you've stuck to your New Year's resolutions or not, the sun is coming out and revealing that you are a different person than you were back when the halls were being decked.

Spring is almost here and it's time to reassess that wardrobe.

But what do you do with those piles of threads that no longer thrill you?

Let us give you a few fashionable tips for figuring that out.

Sell 'em

Sites such as Craigslist, Kijiji and eBay Canada have made it easy for regular folks to become retail mavericks.

If you've got a few pieces that you picked out in a fit of passion, but never quite figured out how to flaunt, selling them to a more suitable style hunter might be the way to go.

But if you've never opened up shop on a web-based platform, it may be difficult to know how to get visitors to even give your garments a second look.

London-based luxury gown designer Farishta Zarify, who won the eBay Canada 2013 Entrepreneur of the Year award for her successful online store, says it's all about the visuals.

"It's online shopping, so you're taking away the experience of seeing the item in person," says Zarify, who recommends taking plenty of photographs of each garment in proper lighting and with a simple background.

"Also make sure to list all the defining characteristics like brand name, size and measurements so the customer knows exactly what they're going to get."

Donate 'em

There's arguably no better way to feel good about saying goodbye to your garments than by giving them away to a great cause.

There are plenty of organizations across Canada that will accept your gently used clothing for donation. These institutions include, are certainly not limited to, The Salvation Army and Clothesline for the Canadian Diabetes Association.

And what if spring has brought with it a brand new job and you no longer need that blazer and those flashy flats?

Turn your charitable sights to Dress for Success, a worldwide organization with locations across Canada, which helps to promote the economic independence of disadvantaged women by providing them with professional attire received via drop-off donation.

"In the process of picking out an outfit and having a conversation with a volunteer stylist, our clients are transformed," says executive director of Dress for Success's Toronto chapter, Paige Souter.

"They start to believe that the next chapter in their lives will be better than the part that they're leaving."

And if you've had a pile accumulating in your closet for ages but lack the means to lug it to your local donation box, you can always pay a quick visit to donationtown.org, an online directory of charities that offer donation pick-up service.

So now that you've figured out a way to curb the closet chaos, go ahead and get 'packin!

Rework 'em

Welcome to the generation of DIY, where every item can be manipulated into something even more magnificent. So don't give up on that garment – it's got life in it yet! To prove this to you, we asked Alana Kumar, the Victoria, B.C.-based creator of DIY blog dreamcreate.ca, to suggest four ways to breathe new life into your wardrobe:

- Use your scissors! Sometimes clothes have unnecessary ruffles, bows, etc. Say a prayer to the DIY gods and start having fun. Cutting ruffles can transform a girly top or dress into a much more classic silhouette, and give your piece a second chance.
- Turn a dress into a skirt.Take a maxi dress and simply tuck the top under. Now you have a new maxi skirt that you can pair with any top.
- For pieces with a few layers like a dress, try removing the top layer with a pair of scissors, sometimes the "shell" of the dress is more beautiful and simple than the original.
- For pieces with a few layers like a dress, try removing the top layer with a pair of scissors, sometimes the "shell" of the dress is more beautiful and simple than the original.

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Take up the vase with these fresh ideas for cut flowers

Gather roses and other buds in new ways.

Vases varied as flowers offer frame and focus

We've been picking flowers and sticking them in containers for thousands of years.

The early Egyptians did it, as did the Chinese. Feng Shui guidelines for creating harmony in a home suggest placing vases of fresh-cut flowers throughout the dwelling to relieve stress, and increase productivity and creativity. Ikebana, the 600-year-old art of Japanese flower arranging, became a craft of high regard, with a spiritual element.

Today, artisans, designers and even florists continue to dream up interesting new vessels.

Visually anchored

New York City-based floral designer Matthew Robbins has created a simple line of vases for Teroforma that takes some of the guesswork out of flower arranging. Each vase — Bud, Cutting, Bouquet, Branch — describes what works best in it, and each is crafted of the same neutral white bisque porcelain, with a subtle yet referential etched motif (see teroforma.com).

"We wanted to create a line of vases that provided a perfect visual anchor for fresh flowers. Clean shapes and surfaces are wonderful; they keep the focus on the flowers," says Robbins.

Bristling with colour

The Museum of Modern Art's store offered several interesting vases at this spring's design preview in New York. French design team Charlotte Arnal and Francis Fevre's Zouzous Brush vase is a polycarbonate receptacle enrobed in a shaggy coat of colourful polypropylene bristles.

Naval gazing

Also at the MoMA store, Charlie Guda perches a narrow vial in front of a small yet powerful lens to magnify a single flower. Guda created the Big Bloom vase as homage to 18th century French physician Augustin-Jean Fresnel, who invented a lens to enhance the brightness of lighthouse lanterns and contributed to naval navigation safety.

Chalk-full of fun

And Ricardo Saint Clair's playful chalkboard-faced vase gives you a surface to add an image or a message, and comes complete with chalk; visit momastore.org.

So many feels

Bliss Home and Design has an array of ceramic vases with textural elements that add drama: The Pompon vase is festooned with white balls; the Sea Sponge is made of layers of glazed clay resembling fronds of ocean sponge, and Monkey Paw is made of dozens of iridescent ceramic blooms. Visit blisshomeanddesign.com.

Glass menagerie

Waterford's Evolution series has some striking examples of artisanal glasswork. The Menagerie Trinidad vase interprets the markings of a graceful ocelot, while the Nairobi invokes the bold stripes of a zebra. The Agate vase was inspired by the colours and concentric bands of quartz agate. Visit macys.com.

Euro splash

Ikea's Socker vase is an enamelled steel-and-eucalyptus-handled bucket of diminutive proportions, so flowers displayed in it have the look of a European flower market Visit ikea.com.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A pool's paradise: Chive's Pooley 2 fully glazed ceramic bud vases come in eight or 12 vase configurations and attach to a rectangular base. A flower can be placed in only one or two, or in the full array. Using only one type of bloom or leaf looks particularly striking. The vases, available at Chive.com, come in a wide range of subtle yet saturated hues. CHIVE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Chive talkin'

Toronto-based design outfit Chive has decided to focus solely on selling vases.

- At the NY Now show in February, their booth was abuzz with buyers placing orders for Pooley 2, a cluster of glazed ceramic bud vases affixed to a slab, as well as the Hudson 4 collection of clear glass vessels in configurations ranging from simple single shapes (such as a hanging egg) to conjoined vases that form caterpillars or bubbles.
- A porcelain bird vase in grey, white, blue or black seems to rest on the flowers or greenery placed in a receptacle at its feet. See chive.com.

Flower your nest

Chive's Porcelain Bird vases come in white, gray, blue and black. Water is added to the vase through a hole in the back, with an opening in the front for flowers or greenery so it appears that the bird is nestled amongst the flora. CHIVE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

More bloom for your buck

Minimalist style Big Bloom Vase, designed by Charlie Guda, features a powerful Fresnel lens which magnifies the flower placed in the vial in front of it. It is available at momastore.org.

MOMA DESIGN STORE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Finding the perfect spots

Waterford's Evolution Agate Collection features zebra, ocelot and agate designs rendered in glass. The vase elevates whatever flower or foliage you place within to an artistic level.

MACY'S/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Colour is a great energizer, and outdoor spaces offer the perfect chance to be more adventurous than we usually are indoors. These lively pieces will brighten up any balcony or patio

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

8 ways to make your patio pop

Bench pressed into action

Add a colourful bench to the patio to co-ordinate with a more traditional or neutral dining set. The Rock Point acacia wood bench can be had in red, marine blue or dandelion yellow, and has the added benefit of being foldable for off-season storage.

PIER 1 IMPORTS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bistro sets the scene

A bistro table and chairs in playful hues set the stage, and you don't need much more than a few additional pieces to create an inviting space, even if it's a tiny terrace. Pier 1's Paris-inspired Neely Bistro Set comes in red or peacock blue rust-resistant cast aluminum.

PIER 1 IMPORTS/ THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GRANDINROAD.COM

Op-art sweetens the pot

Grandin Road's op-arty Lulu planter in a loopy black-and-white graphic would be an exclamation point to colourful outdoor furniture.

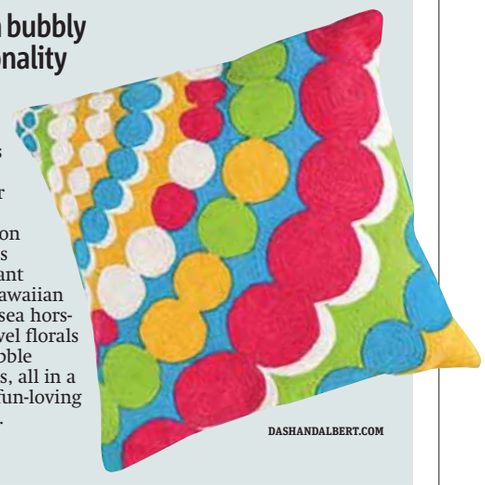
DASHANDALBERT.COM

Chevrons cut a colourful rug

Outdoor polypropylene rugs add colour and give outdoor spaces a more finished, room-like look. Dash and Albert's indoor/outdoor rugs feature East Asian graphic motifs, chevrons and sailing stripes.

Add a bubbly personality

Dash and Albert's new outdoor pillow collection includes exuberant retro-Hawaiian prints, sea horses, crewel florals and bubble patterns, all in a riot of fun-loving colours.



DASHANDALBERT.COM

ZGALLERIE.COM

Reflect your filigree

Z Gallerie's Mimosa lantern features a filigreed Moroccan motif in mandarin, white, lemon or aquamarine.

Get a glow on

Usable as either planters or beverage receptacles, LED-embedded resin GardenGlo containers provide glowing illumination in a range of colours.

GARDENICA.COM

In an octopus's garden

Seattle-based designer Nicole Ketchum creates lightweight acrylic chandeliers in 11 colours that can be hung from trees, deck roofs or anywhere you'd like. Choose a faux ornate pattern or an octopus.

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Bonsai, the haiku of the tree world

In rare form. Ancient technique of shaping trees is the zenith of container planting

A bonsai in the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's collection. BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Many people have a bonsai story: A first bonsai, a struggling bonsai. And many of these stories do not end happily, at least for the bonsai.

But the very best bonsai stories are about passion and beauty and transformation.

"A dewdrop hanging for a split second — that is bonsai," said Julian Velasco, the curator of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's bonsai collection and C.V. Starr Bonsai Museum. "It's very Zen-like. It's awesome."

For Velasco, who nurtures over 350 bonsai trees at the botanic garden — one of the largest and oldest bonsai collections on public display outside Japan — it all started with a bonsai he purchased as a young man at a street fair in San Francisco.

"Pretty quickly I knew it would be a lifelong path," he said.

"When you see the Grand Canyon or Yosemite, you are taking in the emotion of the place as much as the visual image," and bonsai is about that emotion, he said. It is the haiku of the tree world.

"About 30 years ago, a friend brought a bonsai for me from Hawaii, and I've been hooked ever since. Now my wife and I have hundreds of bonsai," he said. "Bonsai are a long-term commitment, though, and most take at least a decade to create. Some can hardly go a day without some kind of care. It's almost like having a pet."

Although Velasco said the ultimate goal is to "open your heart to the tree," he has a few more practical tips for novices.

The first is to choose a variety of tree suited to your environment. Bonsai are trees or shrubs, and most varieties should be grown outside, where they require a period of dormancy in winter.

For most people, however, who want to grow their bonsai indoors or keep them outdoors only in warmer months, tropical varieties like the ficus or Australian brush cherry, with its interesting flower and bark, are good choices. Both are sturdy enough to endure a few beginners' mistakes, do well indoors and can be kept outside so long as temperatures are above 16 degrees Celsius.

Another good option, particularly for people with access to an outdoor growing space, is Chinese elm, which is adaptable and can also be grown indoors.

The next step along the continuum of hardiness is junipers, particularly Chinese and procumbens varieties. Small varieties of azaleas, which are sturdy with nice leaves and flowers, are also popular among bonsai enthusiasts, Velasco said.

Outdoor bonsai are delicate, however, and need to be protected once temperatures reach -6 degrees C.

"Most people will bury just the pot part of the bonsai in soil and mulch up against a house or fence to protect it from drying winds. Burying the pot evens out the temperature for the roots so there are no sudden drops or super hard freezes," Velasco said.

Another strategy is burying just the pot part of the bonsai under a bench in the winter, and covering the bench with some clear plastic.

In addition to selecting the right variety, beginners need to understand bonsai stress and watering, Velasco said.

"A lot of times people bring home a bonsai and it drops its leaves and looks unwell. It's just stressed out. It needs time to adjust, and a little patience," he explained.

"Monitor the water very carefully. Without leaves it won't need as much water. Hold off on water until the soil dries out. And little by little, when you hold off on water, buds will start to appear. And as that starts to happen, the need for water will start to increase."

Many bonsai growers keep the tip of a chopstick deep in the soil toward the back of the pot as a moisture gauge.

"If the chopstick is moist you don't need to water. But you never want the roots in the pot to get completely dry. Water it only when it's almost dry," Velasco said.

Water from the top down and make sure the water drains out the bottom of the pot.

As for pruning, allow the tree to grow five to seven leaves before pruning it back by about two leaves of the new growth, Velasco said.

"Only prune what's actively growing. Trees need to grow to be happy and healthy," he said.

"If you're on top of your game, the tree will repay you by being healthy and beautiful. Just try to appreciate what the bonsai is trying to express to you."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bonsai for beginners

Bonsai, Japanese for "planted in a tray," originated in China in around 200 A.D., and the art spread several hundred years later to Japan. The art of bonsai was introduced to the U.S. in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and at least one of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden bonsai trees is more than 200 years old.

- Bonsai is horticulture, art, philosophy and even a way of life in the form of a single tree, lovingly pruned and trained to exist in a small pot so that it reflects the majesty of the natural environment, explained Julian Velasco, the curator of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's bonsai collection.
- Luckily for beginners, learning to nurture a bonsai has never been easier.
- Expert help, once found only in Japan or China, is now more readily available at bonsai clubs and shops around the world. The American Bonsai Society lists bonsai clubs across the United States and Canada, and Bonsai Clubs International lists clubs worldwide.

One singular Zen-sation

"It's very Zen-like, " says Julian Velasco, curator of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's bonsai collection. "It's awesome."

As the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined

A Malus slant-style bonsai in spring in New York.

Rock, scissors, bonsai

An acer buergerianum in the root-over-rock style of bonsai.

ALL PHOTOS BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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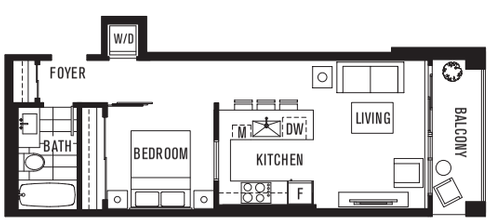

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RENNIE MARKETING SYSTEMS

The perfect bedside companion

A bedside table is the last thing you see at night and the first thing to help you out of bed in the morning. For most of us, it's a bookshelf, lamp and clock holder, medicine cabinet and refreshment centre. Choosing the best nightstand is essential. Here are a few guidelines to getting it right

DESIGN CENTRE
Karl Lohnes
home@metronews.ca

Retro living: Shelving built in to the headboard takes up barely any floor space. Andes White Bed, $900, CB2.com.

Size it up

- For good scale, choose a nightstand that is approximately half the width of the bed
- Ideally, your nightstand should be two to four inches higher than the top of your mattress. Modern beds tend to have very low mattress heights while traditional sets are quite high. Note: Mattress heights vary from 18 inches (from floor to top of mattress) for a modern bed to as high as 36 inches for a traditional bed.
- The depth of the nightstand should be less than 24 inches, which will make getting out of bed easier.

Function junction

- A drawer is a necessity for medications.
- Open shelves keep reading materials accessible.
- Small dressers and chests with multi-drawers are great for small spaces. One on each side of the bed can replace the storage of a regular dresser in the bedroom.
- Open legs give a lighter look to the nightstand and keep a cramped room feeling spacious.

Perfectly modern: Hidden storage, open shelves and display make for a great bedside companion. Canadian designer Tim Antoniuk's Arctic 1 Nightstand, $630, UrbanMode.com.

Style savvy

- Mirrored finishes offer a transitional style and give a reflective, open feeling to a small room. If choosing a wood finish, match it to the bed or other furnishings you have in the bedroom.
- A matching nightstand on each side of the bed help create continuity. This helps to reduce the visual clutter when decorating.
- Topping a tired antique nightstand with grey marble or stone will protect and give a new look to an old treasure.
- Many of the '70s retro-inspired beds have built-in nightstands for a sleek look.

Small space winner: A mirrored, slim-styled console dresser saves space, reflects light and offers great storage. Hayworth Console Chest, $560, Pier1.ca.

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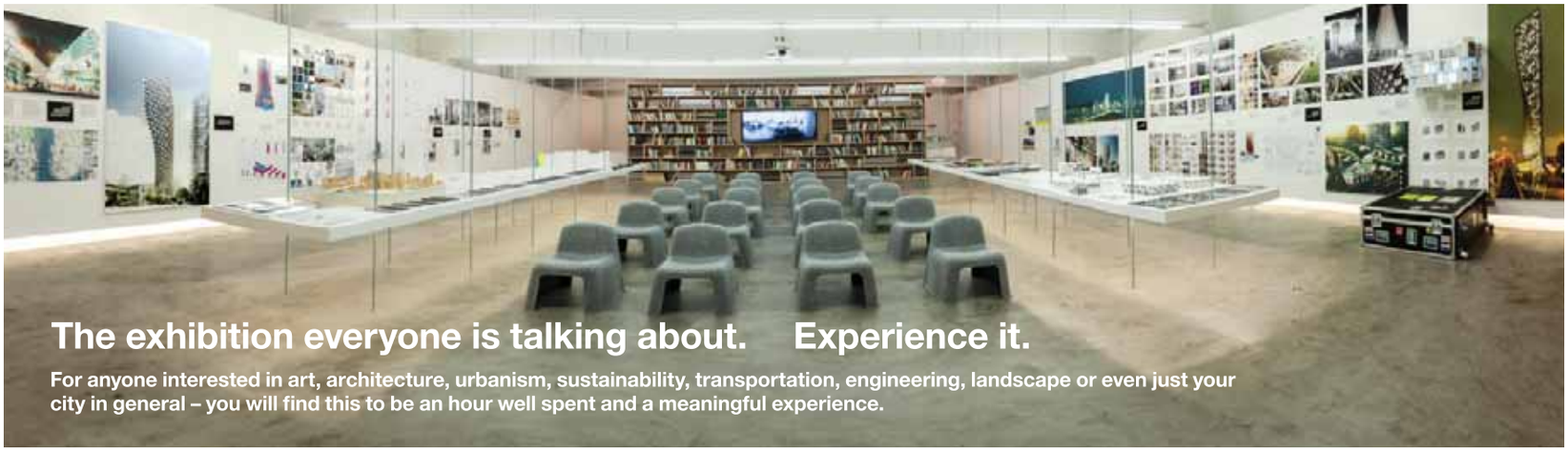
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Spruce up your favourite outdoor room now, then relax in it all summer long. CONTRIBUTED

All hands on deck

Get on board. Paul Lafrance has timely tips to get outdoor space shipshape for summer

The days are finally getting warmer and it's almost time to enjoy our backyards again. But after a long, rough winter what used to be an outdoor oasis may be in shambles. Luckily, deck guru Paul Lafrance has some tips and tricks for easy weekend makeovers that will keep your outdoor space beautiful, inviting, and stress-free for the summer ahead.

Stain the deck

Guaranteed this winter had snow and ice accumulating on your deck. If you don't have composite decking, you need to avoid those water stains on the wood by sanding and staining it. Do this as soon as the weather hits 10 degrees so that you are doing the work when it's still a bit chilly outside instead of on a beautiful day when you'd rather be on the deck relaxing.

Consider composite

If the structure of your deck is sound and the framework is lasting, then the best possible thing you can do for your sanity and the resale value of your home is to replace the deck boards with composite decking. This is easily a weekend project and will save you hours of maintenance in the future when you simply need to wash it clean instead of staining it.

Rethink your railings

To add more of a design flair to your deck, consider other options outside of the traditional wooden railings. Change them to glass for an upgraded view, or choose colours like black, white, or bronze to better suit your taste. You can even add railings with mirrors for a more interesting look.

Light it up

I cannot stress enough how important lighting is to design, and how much it can transform an outdoor space. You don't need to be an electrician to incorporate LED lights with your deck, or to add lights that will help you see better and boost the ambience at night.

Invest in furnishings

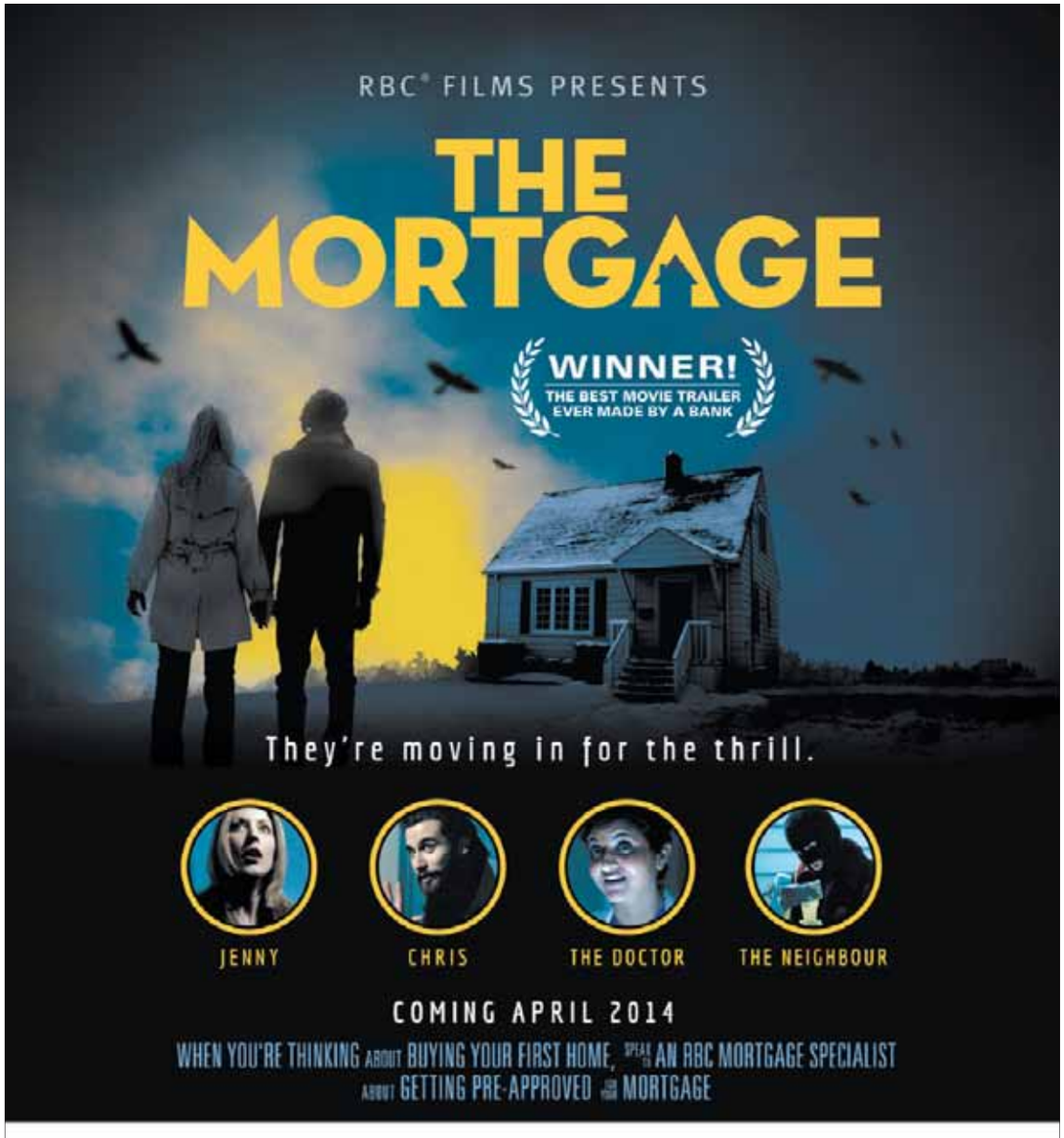
Deck furniture has been completely revolutionized from the past — there are outdoor furnishings now that are being mistaken for living room furniture. You can make over your whole space with some chairs and tables, or even create the effect of a room by adding an umbrella to a dining or living space outdoors.

Add privacy screens

Privacy screens are a great way to not only add privacy to your backyard space, but to also create a focal point and a creative "wow" for guests. Instead of simply copying the fencing that you have and making a screen out of it, consider incorporating something more decorative that suits your design tastes. You can choose anything from faux stone to something with a hanging water feature. If you can see it from inside it makes the outdoor space even more inviting.

Decked Out

Watch Paul Lafrance in all-new seasons of Decked Out and Disaster Decks, Tuesdays beginning at 9 p.m. ET/PT on HGTV Canada.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Green thumb or no, these are good to grow

Indoor decor and more. Plants pretty enough to eat or sturdy enough to neglect

Homeowners who are wary of growing plants indoors, especially if they travel often or are prone to forgetting to water, might want to consider a variety of low-maintenance plants that breathe life and design into a room.

"I've actually been starting to put plants into all of my projects," says Kyla Bidgood, an interior designer. "They just bring a whole other level of life and cosiness to a space."

The Victoria-based Bidgood says there are easy ways to bring plants into a space, even for those without a green thumb.

Living on air

"A great way to add some greenery to a space that is really low maintenance is air plants," she says.

Tillandsia, also known as air plants, are native to the forests, mountains and deserts of Central and South America, the southern United States and the West Indies. They don't need soil because water and nutrients are absorbed through the leaves, and their roots serve only as an anchor.

"They are awesome, and you can put them in everything," says Bidgood. "There are lamps where you can put something in the base of the lamp, and you can pop an air plant in there."

High and low

Combining plants of various heights and kinds is a great way to create dimension and design in a room.

In her living room, Bidgood combined a tall blood orange tree with a smaller rubber tree to create a visually interesting vignette.

Citrus appeal

"If you have the natural light and have a green thumb, citrus plants are great," she says. "They produce beautiful fruit you can actually eat, but they do need more water and light."

Bringing edible plants indoors, like citrus trees, not only adds colour and life to a room, but it also allows homeowners to have a taste of spring in their home year round.

Edible flowers

Judy Kenzie, owner of Strathcona 1890 Urban Seed Collections, grows her garden in containers around her yard and indoors.

"This year, I tried to grow edible flowers inside," she says. "I wanted to try it and germinate, and grow them inside."

According to Kenzie, growing edible plants inside often requires some experimentation, and a willingness to see the plants homeowners may already have as food.

"What a lot of people don't realize are things like pansies that you can buy as indoor potted plants are edible flowers," she says. "You could have those flowers on your window sill and they would be beautiful, and you can throw them in your salad."

Pea plants are another option for injecting pops of colour into your kitchen, while also being great to add to salads and sandwiches.

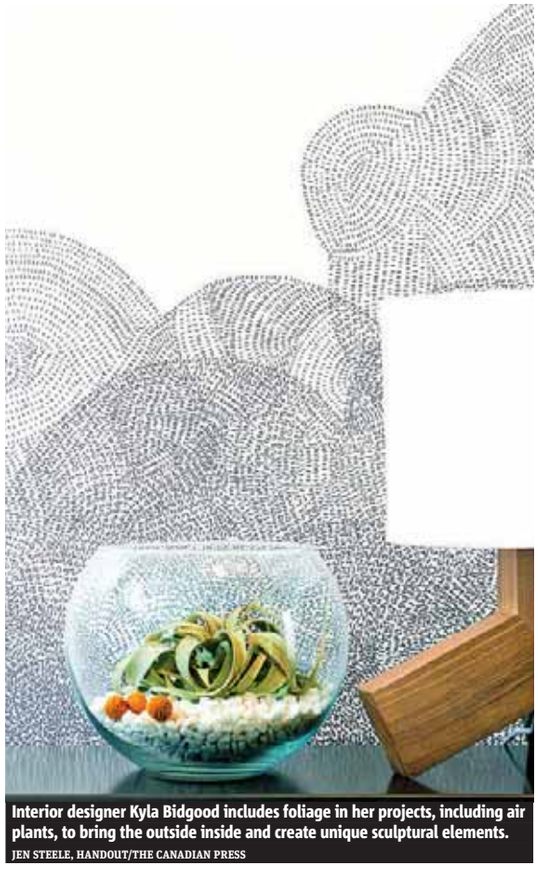
Even though a homeowner would have to pollinate the plant to get peas, Kenzie explains, the rest of the plant is edible from the flowers to the leaves.

Greens year-round

A piece of equipment Kenzie hopes will become a fixture in every kitchen is a grow light, which allows homeowners to grow lettuces and salad greens year-round.

Grow lights are commonly used by gardeners to help start seeds indoors in the spring, but Kenzie says homeowners could use them to nurture greens to supply their household, and even their neighbours, throughout the cold winter months.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



Interior designer Kyla Bidgood includes foliage in her projects, including air plants, to bring the outside inside and create unique sculptural elements.
JEN STEELE, HANDOUT/THE CANADIAN PRESS

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metro

FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS

Thursday, April 10, 2014

Market roundup

Metro takes a cross-Canada trip to find out how far $300,000 to $350,000 will go in today's housing market.

COMPILED BY GEORDON OMAND

Calgary

This cowtown condo, deep in Calgary's south end, is sure to make any homeowner proud. Built by award-winning Homes by Avi, it offers 1,184 square feet of living space, complete with espresso cabinets and an island in the kitchen. A double garage, fenced backyard and private concrete patio complete this stylish south-end home. Asking price is $344,000.

LISTING: RE/MAX HOUSE OF REAL ESTATE

Ottawa

This three-storey, award-winning townhouse is all ready for a homeowner. Asking price is $314,500. There are two regular bedrooms on the third floor, as well as a four-piece, ensuite washroom off a third master bedroom, also on the third floor. The second level houses a large chef's kitchen with dining and living room areas, while a mud room and family room are located on the first floor.

LISTING: EXIT REALTY MATRIX

Regina

This family-friendly home includes four bedrooms and four washrooms, as well as a generous sized lawn and an oversized single-vehicle, attached garage. Asking price is $339,900. The square footage comes in at slightly more than 1,400 square feet. Recent renovations involved an additional two-piece washroom and allowing for direct backyard access on the main level. The yard includes an outdoor skating rink and a hot tub, both negotiable.

LISTING: ROYAL LEPAGE REGINA REALTY

Halifax

Comfort and convenience combine in this well cared for and tastefully updated three-bedroom home. Besides 1,144 square feet of space, good insulation and new windows make for a high EnerGuide rating. The property is located close to the shops and restaurants of nearby Hydrostone Market. Asking price is $348,900. A professional paint job is promised prior to closing.

LISTING: KELLER WILLIAMS REALTY

Saskatoon

An abundance of south-facing windows ensures ample natural light for this corner unit townhouse, located on a quiet crescent in the south Saskatoon residential community of Stonebridge. Built a scant five years ago and boasting 1,337 square feet, hardwood floors, granite countertops and an upstairs washroom skylight, the asking price for this property is $334,900.

LISTING: HALLMARK REALTY & ASSOCIATES LTD.

Toronto

While not exactly downtown living, this three-bedroom, two-bathroom home fits the first-timer's price point. It is located close to transit, shopping and schools. The open-concept design includes laminate floor and garage access from the inside, all for an asking price of $324,900. An additional monthly fee of $190 goes toward snow removal and lawn care.

LISTING: CENTURY 21 PERCY FULTON LTD.

London

A walkout, wraparound deck overlooking a large lot makes this three-bedroom east London house shine. A vaulted ceiling and cultured stone fireplace with stained mantel only add to the elegant decor, along with decorative columns, contemporary spindle rail and open-concept design. The two-storey property includes four bedrooms, three washrooms — two full, one half — and an attached double garage. Asking price is $324,275.

LISTING: RE/MAX CENTRE CITY REALTY

Edmonton

This three-bedroom, two-storey townhouse in Miller Park Estates boasts a fully finished walk-out basement, complete with family room and two-piece washroom downstairs. There are four total washrooms, along with a gas fireplace in the living room, a rear deck and patio and green space behind the unit. The $342,500 asking price is helped by low condo fees, which run $178 per month.

LISTING: CENTURY 21 A.L.L. STARS REALTY

Vancouver

This spacious one-bedroom, one-washroom condominium is a stone's throw away from Jericho Beach, making it a perfect location for pet lovers. The property includes stainless steel appliances, stone counters and dark hardwood floors, as well as a 16-foot south-facing patio. Nearby shopping and an enormous master bedroom make this 656-square-foot, $342,500 unit a steal of a deal.

LISTING: SUTTON GROUP WEST COAST REALTY

Winnipeg

Located in the heart of Winnipeg's colourful and cosmopolitan Exchange District, this condo is housed in a gorgeous boutique-style building. Exposed brick and beam design complement a unique 1,100-square-foot floor plan. Stainless steel appliances are included in the $329,900 asking price. Oversized windows, a huge island-style kitchen and oversized hot water tanks round out the deal.

LISTING: RE/MAX PERFORMANCE REALTY

Become interested in rates

Borrowing money to buy a home is likely going to be the biggest financial commitment you ever make. So it's important to do your research and understand what you're getting into.

Here's a quick guide.

Interest rates

Homebuyers have enjoyed low interest rates for a while now. "And I think they're going to hold for several more months," said Toronto mortgage broker David Smith. "By the fall, we're probably going to see 3.09 and 3.1 perhaps, and these are still extraordinary low rates and cheap money."

Down payment

Put down at least 20 per cent of the home price, advises Will Britton, a financial adviser in Kingston, Ont., and a member of Advocis, the Financial Advisors Association of Canada.

You will qualify for a conventional mortgage loan, which is equal to or less than 80 per cent of the lending value of the property. Otherwise, a high-ratio mortgage requires mortgage loan insurance from a provider such as Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and that will cost more.

Pre-approval

It's important to be pre-approved for a mortgage by a bank. "Given how competitive the marketplace is, if your offer has a condition on financing, you won't win the property," Smith said.

YLVA VAN BUUREN

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It's a good idea to carefully consider what you want in a house first before you start looking. STEPHEN COBURN/SHUTTERSTOCK

Understand the process

JENNIFER TAPLIN
For Metro

Buying a house can be an overwhelming financial decision.

First-time homebuyers tend to be highly educated and are quite thorough with their research by using online tools to find potential properties and calculate costs. But they aren't as confident when it comes to mortgages and the technical process of buying a house, said Terri Gibbons, with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, who is based in North York, Ont.

"It is important for first-time homebuyers to determine how much they can afford before they begin the process, keeping in mind all of the upfront costs," Gibbons said. "It is recommended that first-time buyers seek out a mortgage professional and ask lots of questions and clarify their understanding along the way."

It's also a good idea to carefully consider what they want in a house first before they start looking, she added. Considerations include number of bedrooms, location, resale potential, and any renovation costs.

"It is costly to move, so these considerations are very important," Gibbons said.

When all the ducks are in a row and first-time house hunters find the right property at the right price, Winnipeg real estate lawyer Leandro Zylberman advises to take a breath before making an offer.

"When I get into the picture, it's usually after the offer has been signed and accepted," he said. "Once I get that, it's too late to make any changes."

If there are components of the offer the buyers don't understand, they can make the offer subject to lawyer approval, Zylberman advised.

This part of the process is made easier with advice of a real estate agent, who doesn't charge commission for buying a house, only for selling, Zylberman said, which is a definite perk for first-timers.

And don't forget about the closing costs, which can be more than moving and lawyer fees. Many provinces have a land or deed transfer tax that catches many first-time homebuyers unaware.

From start to finish, the homebuying journey can be a long one. According to CMHC statistics, first-time homebuyers take three months longer than repeat buyers to make their purchase. That's about 10 months total of planning.

Almost two-thirds of first-time homebuyers are younger than 35, where only 20 per cent of repeat buyers are younger than 35 years of age. A large majority, 82 per cent, of first-time buyers have a post-secondary education.

When looking for your first home, should you consider buying the best house on the worst street, or the worst house on the best street? BURLINGHAM/SHUTTERSTOCK

The perfect location

JENNIFER TAPLIN
For Metro

The old adage that location, location, location is a top factor when buying a house is no joke. But determining that just right location can be a struggle for first-time homebuyers.

For example, should you consider buying the best house on the worst street, or the worst house on the best street?

"Your value is going to be the worst house on the best street," said Halifax real estate agent Paula Langille. "It's usually the most affordable."

Having the nicest house on the block isn't as advantageous because equity won't build as quickly, she said. But a fixer-upper on a charming street will be worth more in the long run.

"And also your carrying costs will be less than anyone else on the street; your taxes will be a bit less."

Marilynn Strilchuk, a real estate agent in rural Alberta, agrees. She said picking a good community can be the far better choice because of the equity.

And when it comes to choosing which community to live in — city, suburb or rural — there are several factors to nail down first before hitting any open houses.

Strilchuk said if a homebuyer has a family or plans to, they need to check out what services are available, such as schools, parks, and community centres.

Generally bigger houses with garages and large yards are more affordable in the suburbs, but that's not always the case. For example, properties in the Edmonton bedroom communities of St. Albert and Sherwood Park can be pricey, but Spruce Grove and Stony Plain are cheaper.

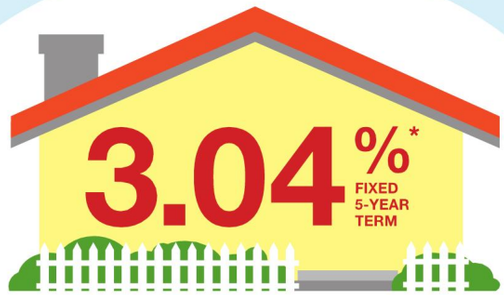
"Sometimes it's not about what you want when you're a first-time homebuyer, but it's what you can afford," Strilchuk said.

Where do you want to live?

Location is a critical factor. A home with everything you need, but in the wrong location is probably not the right home for you. Here are some tips from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to consider about location.

- Do you want to live in a city, a town or in the countryside?
- How easy will it be to get to where you work? How much will the commuting cost?
- Where will your children go to school? How will they get there?
- Do you need a safe walking area or recreational facility, such as a park, nearby?
- How close would you like to be to family and friends?

An offer so good you'll want to tell your friends



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Condos. Settle into a different type of lifestyle

YLVA VAN BUUREN
For Metro

It's a great time to buy a condominium.

The market is more balanced compared to houses, says Toronto mortgage broker David Smith. And there are lots of long- and short-term benefits.

Here is a list to consider:

1 Affordability. While budget will dictate location, amenities and size, a condominium is usually more affordable than a house. "For many first-time buyers, it's the only way to enter the real estate market," Smith said.

2 Availability. There are lots of condos on the market, Smith said, and they are good value — an anticipated downward direction of prices hasn't occurred.

3 Ease of living. Christopher Dewdney, a Toronto financial adviser and member of Advocis, the Financial Advisors Association of Canada, says condo fees generally cover maintenance such as snow removal, lawn care, and even indoor plumbing in some cases. Many condominiums provide amenities such as a pool, fitness club, and outdoor barbecues.

4 Lifestyle. Some condominiums are "lifestyle communities" with regular events such as wine tasting and movie nights where owners can network and meet new friends.

5 Safety. Most condos have built-in security including security cameras and a concierge.

6 Good investment. "Historically, you see an appreciation in the value of real estate," Dewdney said. That's great compared to renting where you end up with no equity or ownership. A condominium could become a rental property in the future for you, too.

7 Net worth. You are building your net worth. Through the property, you are building equity, Dewdney said. "If there's a financial opportunity or emergency, you could always secure a line of credit against that equity in the property."

8 Stepping Stone. A condominium will be worth more in the future — if you sell it, you can use the surplus towards a new property or investment.

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Be prepared and know what you can afford for a down payment for a new home, and what your price range and budget are before you get started.
MONKEY BUSINESS IMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK

An investment that's worth the challenge

KRISTA SYLVESTER
For Metro

Buying your first home can be a daunting task but it's an investment that is worth the challenge, especially if you know the tricks of the trade.

Calgary realtor Bill Leesman is experienced in helping first-time homebuyers find their ideal first home and his biggest advice would be to do their research first.

"You have to be prepared and know what you can afford for a down payment, and what your price range and budget are before you get started," he said.

"First-time homebuyers should be prepared to keep their first home for at least four or five years in order to get enough equity to be able to upgrade to a new home later on. Buying your first home for just a year or two doesn't make much sense."

That's why Leesman recommends buying the right size of home — if you are going to have a growing family, make sure you have enough room in the house down the road.

And while nice appliances and several bedrooms are always nice to have, they don't factor in to the overall cost as much as some people might believe, Leesman said. Leesman cautions homebuyers to make sure the appliances are in working order or they might have to buy new ones after they move in.

However, developed basements and garages certainly drive the cost up.

"People are actually better off buying homes with undeveloped basements and without garages and then finishing them later themselves. People can generally build their own garage or develop the basement after the fact for less than what it would cost added on to the house price."

Another big factor that can drive up the cost of a home is location. "Busier streets tend to cost less than quieter streets or houses in cul-de-sacs," Leesman said.

Quintessential Thai flavours compliment veg

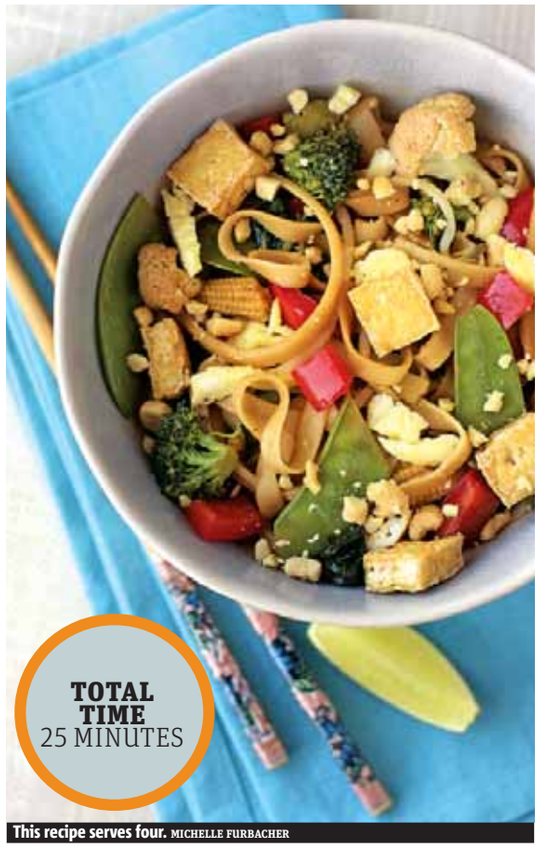
Vegetable Pad Thai.
Everyone's favourite street dish from Thailand goes vegetarian

"(Pad Thai) is a traditional national dish served all over Thailand. It's sweet and spicy with a hint of tartness thanks to the lime, and features a wide variety of vegetables," writes Linda Woolven in The All-New Vegetarian Passport.

1. Cook the noodles according to the package instructions.

2. In a large frying pan, heat the oil. Add the tofu and cook, stirring, for about 7 minutes, or until slightly browned. Add the egg (if using) and cook, stirring, for about 2 minutes. Add the bok choy, bell pepper, broccoli and cauliflower and cook, stirring, for 3 to 4 minutes. Add the mung bean sprouts, snow peas, baby corn, bamboo shoots, soy sauce, rice vinegar and chili flakes and cook, stirring, for 3 to 4 minutes. Add the noodles and peanuts and heat through. Serve with lime wedges to garnish.

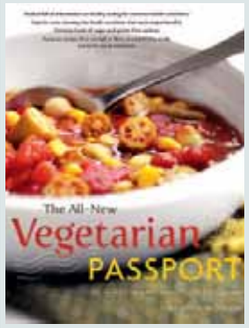
FROM THE ALL-NEW VEGETARIAN PASSPORT BY LINDA WOOLVEN (WHITECAP, 2013)



This recipe serves four. MICHELLE FURBACHER

Cookbook of the Week

Around the world



Discover the best vegetarian delicacies from all over the world without leaving your kitchen. In The All-New Vegetarian Passport, Linda Woolven exposes readers to international flavours that also help to create a healthy new relationship between your body and your plate. The book boasts 350 of Woolven's favourite recipes and is split into sections that include North Africa and The Middle East, The Mediterranean, Europe, India, Asia, Latin America and The Caribbean, North America and more. METRO

FLASH FOOD
From your fridge to your table in 30 minutes or less

Ingredients

- 6 oz (175 g) wide brown-rice Thai noodles
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) first cold pressed extra virgin olive oil
- 2 oz (60 g) extra-firm tofu, cubed
- 1 egg, beaten (optional; omit for diabetes, multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis and vegan diet)
- 2 baby bok choy, chopped
- 1 medium-size red bell pepper, diced (omit for rheumatoid arthritis)
- 1/2 cup (125 ml) broccoli florets
- 1/2 cup (125 ml) cauliflower florets
- 1 cup (250 ml) mung bean sprouts
- Handful each of snow peas, canned baby corn, drained and rinsed; canned bamboo shoots, drained and rinsed
- 3 tbsp (45 ml) soy sauce
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) rice vinegar
- 1/4 tsp (1 ml) chili flakes
- 1/4 cup (60 ml) crushed unsalted peanuts
- lime wedges

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LEAVE A LASTING IMPRESSION

You have just seven seconds to make a first impression. And a ready smile, neat and appropriate attire, and fresh breath, especially, are all part of making a good one.

On the other hand, bad breath (as well as being grouchy, wearing ill-fitting clothing, and playing with your hair or moustache) leaves a lasting bad impression.

Here are times when good oral hygiene and body care are especially important.

THE COCKTAIL PARTY: There is no way around close contact at a social gathering. You are rubbing shoulders with strangers, having quick conversations with old friends, and spotting people across the room that you would really like to meet.

A JOB INTERVIEW: Problems like bad breath can definitely spoil your chances in an important job interview. There is going to be a handshake and a discussion, perhaps in close vicinity.

A FIRST DATE: Meeting a potential partner for the first time is stressful as it is. You don't want to worry about your breath. And you certainly don't want to find out that this person takes your breath away — in a bad way.

KARAOKE: Sharing a stage puts you in very close quarters with another person, and if you are belting out a song together into one microphone, yikes.

** Crest Complete toothpaste fights cavities. To ensure this product is right for you, always read and follow the label.*

THE AIRPORT: Whether you are arriving at the airport yourself or you are picking someone up, there are going to be hugs and kisses with all the greetings.

DINNER PARTY: Getting together around a dinner table is what you do to have fun, and you can count on lots of hugs and kisses at the beginning and end.

VLADIMIR GJORGIEV/SHUTTERSTOCK

BAD BREATH CAN BE A BUMMER

Research has shown halitosis is a confidence killer, and can make a person super sensitive about breath problems.

The sooner you determine if you have a problem, the sooner you can do something about it.

To find out:

- Cover your mouth and nose with your hand, and exhale. Now breathe in through your nose. Does the air smell bad?
- Watch how people react when you talk. Do they stand at a distance, or act a little odd after you speak?
- If your partner starts to avoid kissing you on the mouth, there may be an issue. But it may be their breath, too.

What to do? Improve your oral hygiene by brushing your teeth, flossing, and using a dental mouthwash, regularly. Talk to your dentist about your concerns, and be sure to always carry mints and mouthwash, too.

REFRESHING TIPS FOR MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

You have been thinking about this moment for a while. Now the lights are low, the two of you are alone, love is definitely in the air. You lean in, close your eyes and purse your lips for that first kiss — and wait and wait.

OMG. Your date has recoiled. Was it your breath?

Bad breath is actually one of society's oldest and most troublesome social problems. Called halitosis, it can be caused by different factors, including poor oral hygiene, strong smelling foods such as fish, onion, garlic, and even coffee, smoking, and dental and health problems. It is the third most frequent reason — after cavities and periodontal disease — that people see their dentist.

Often, a relationship problem has spurred on the visit. Since sense of smell is so closely linked to your emotions, sweet smelling breath has everything to do with love, kissing and connecting — or not connecting.

SINGLE — AND NOT LOVING IT

Bad breath is often referred to as a social life killer. In fact, in research, sufferers say it ruins their life.

Not surprisingly, single people with bad breath often have problems dating, and getting married. Furthermore, they are so anxious about their breath in social settings that they avoid face-to-face encounters and can become loners — and lonely.

Thirty-four per cent of survey participants with halitosis said their bad breath made them hesitant to speak to others.

SANTIAGO CORNEJO/SHUTTERSTOCK

If you are starting to date someone you really like who has bad breath, try some subtle hints such as eating mints after dinner, avoiding strong smelling foods, and even talking about your own oral hygiene habits.

MARRIED — AND NOT LOVING IT EITHER

In research, sufferers say bad breath causes them to sleep separately from their spouse.

While couples who have been together for a while can be forgiving and understanding, bad breath can still be difficult to ignore, especially in the bedroom. Halitosis is often the reason behind partner rejection and marital problems.

If bad breath is ruining intimate moments, be honest but be kind. Encourage your partner to brush their teeth, floss, and rinse with a mouthwash at least twice a day. This will prevent bacteria from settling in the mouth. If there is a new chronic bad breath issue, check in with the dentist, too.

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1 FLOSS 2 BRUSH 3 RINSE

MY Crest® + scope® ROUTINE

Crest® Complete toothpaste fights cavities. ©2014 P&G

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ORAL-16266

The Canucks fired GM Mike Gillis on Tuesday, but there were plenty other disappointing NHL campaigns around hockey this season. Scan this image to vote on who should be the next NHL executive to hit the road.

SPORTS 4

Players take blame for firing of Gillis

NHL. Francesco Aquilini, chairman of Canucks Sports and Entertainment, says it was time for a change

CAM TUCKER
cam.tucker@metronews.ca

As much as Wednesday was about the hiring of Trevor Linden, it was also about the firing of Mike Gillis.

At 9 a.m. on the button Wednesday, the Canucks officially announced that Linden had been named the club's new president of hockey operations. At 11:49 a.m. the previous day, the Canucks sent out a press release stating Gillis had been relieved of his duties as the team's president and general manager.

That was fast.

Francesco Aquilini, the chairman of Canucks Sports and Entertainment, tried to steer clear of blame, thanking Gillis on numerous occasions during a press conference at Rogers Arena.

"It was a time for a change. I'm disappointed. I think all the fans are disappointed. I'm a big fan. We need a new direction in the organization, a new voice," said Aquilini.

Gillis began his reign as general manager in the spring of 2008. His six years on the job brought about a trip to the Stanley Cup Final in 2011, back-to-back Presidents' Trophy titles, and as close to glory as a team can get without actually winning a championship.

There were criticisms, too. Take, for instance, the fact that this time last year he had Roberto Luongo and Cory Schneider as a goaltending duo and now, through two separate trades, without both.

Two elite goalies gone. The return for Schneider was the ninth overall pick that turned into Bo Horvat, who is still playing junior hockey. For Luongo, the Canucks got centre Shawn Matthias and goalie Jacob Markstrom.

The night before Gillis was sacked, the Canucks lost to the Anaheim Ducks on home ice. The result officially eliminated Vancouver's team from playoff contention. Chants of "Fire Gillis" rang out from some of the fans still remaining.

"Whenever a GM gets fired, it falls on the players. It's our performance on the ice that cost him a job," said forward Daniel Sedin.

"That's the bottom line. It's always tough to take as a player. That was tough. But then waking up this morning, seeing Trevor's name, that brought some excitement back for sure."

Trevor Linden, left, and Canucks owner Francesco Aquilini arrive at a press conference on Wednesday announcing Linden as the team's new president of hockey operations. JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"Whenever a GM gets fired, it falls on the players. It's our performance on the ice that cost him a job."

Canucks winger Daniel Sedin, on the firing of president and general manager Mike Gillis.

Playoff flameouts

Oh, Canadiens!

The Toronto Maple Leafs' playoff hopes ended on Tuesday with a 3-0 loss in Tampa Bay, leaving the Montreal Canadiens as the lone Canadian team left fighting for a Stanley Cup.

According to hockey-reference.com, the last time there was just one post-season participant from north of the border was in 1973 when, yes, the Habs topped the Chicago Blackhawks in the Stanley Cup final. METRO

The Canadiens will be Canada's only hope when the playoffs begin. GETTY IMAGES

NHL

Sharp a thorn in the Habs' side

Patrick Sharp set up Marian Hossa's tying goal in the final minute of regulation and then got the game-winner 43 seconds into overtime to lift the Chicago Blackhawks to a 3-2 win over the Montreal Canadiens on Wednesday night.

Jeremy Morin also scored in the Blackhawks' fourth straight win overall, and their first in overtime this season after seven losses.

Dale Weise and Francis Bouillon scored for Montreal, which snapped a two-game win streak.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NBA. Randolph, Gasol double trouble for Heat

Zach Randolph had 25 points and 11 rebounds, Marc Gasol added 20 points and 14 rebounds and the Memphis Grizzlies kept their playoff hopes alive with a 107-102 victory over the Miami Heat on Wednesday night. With the Indiana Pacers' 104-102 win at Milwaukee, the Heat fell to second place in the Eastern Conference. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LeBron James and the Heat are no longer sitting atop the Eastern Conference. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mixed martial arts

Flyweight title on the line at UFC 174

Demetrious (Mighty Mouse) Johnson will defend his UFC flyweight title against Russian Ali (Puncher) Bagautinov in the main event of UFC 174 on June 14 in Vancouver. The co-main event at the Rogers Arena will see Kelowna's Rory (Ares) MacDonald take on Tyron (The Chosen One) Woodley. THE CANADIAN PRESS

MLB. Blue Jays' bats blast Astros into orbit

Canadian Brett Lawrie hit his first home run of the season and Toronto starter Brandon Morrow struck out nine over six innings as the Blue Jays defeated the Houston Astros 7-3 on Wednesday night at Rogers Centre.

Lawrie belted a two-run shot off reliever Josh Zeid in the seventh inning as Toronto (5-4) earned its first series victory of the young season. Morrow allowed five hits and three earned runs as the Blue Jays moved above the .500 mark.

Melky Cabrera, Maicer Izturis and Dioner Navarro had two hits apiece as Toronto outhit the Astros 10-6.

The Blue Jays will go for a sweep of the three-game series on Thursday night.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
The Sun in your birth sign does wonders for your confidence but there will still be times when self-belief deserts you. Keep telling yourself there is no good reason you should fear the worst, now or ever.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
This may not be an easy time of year for you but you can sense that the day will soon be here when your luck turns. Maybe that day will come sooner if you act as if nothing could possibly go wrong.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
Tone down your comments because the planets warn if you say something others consider over the top it will rebound on you in ways you had not expected.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
Think twice before volunteering to help the less fortunate through a task you know little about. Others may be wowed by your enthusiasm but they won't be so impressed if you make a mess of the job.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
Don't expose yourself to any kind of situation where you do not have full control over what happens. Not even your confidence will protect you from people who do not share your sense of fair play.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
You seem to have a phobia about something that at other times would not worry you. It may continue for a few days but come the start of next week you'll be all smiles again.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Make sure you know what you are talking about today, especially if you are dealing with people who are experts. If you make claims that cannot be backed up with facts, they will make you look silly.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
For some reason you seem to believe you don't have the talent to be a success. That isn't true. Get your head straight and get on with making your mark on the world.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
You have a tendency to say things you don't believe because you enjoy seeing the looks of shock on people's faces. It may be a lot of fun, but it could backfire today.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
You can be sarcastic and the planets warn that your caustic way with words could have long-term consequences that damage others and you.

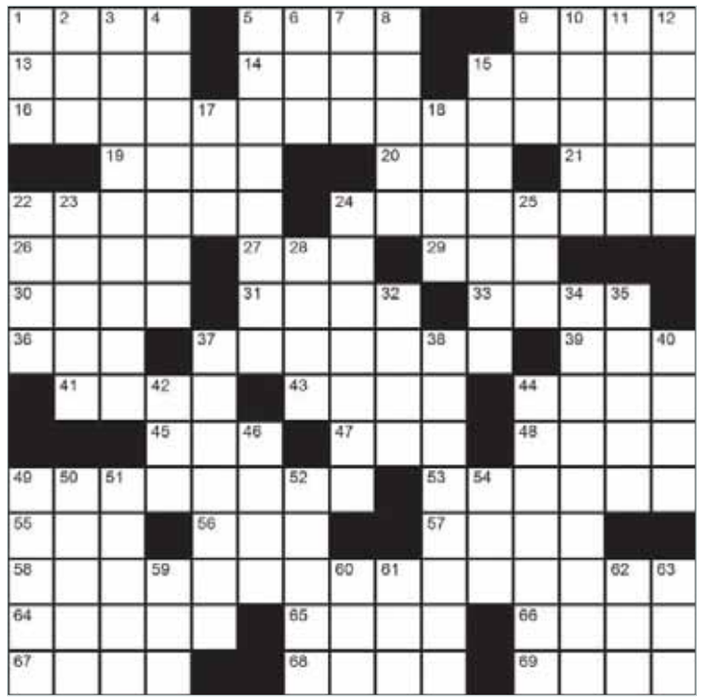
♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You may not get much in the way of thanks for a good deed today but that's OK. The world would be a sad place indeed if we only ever did favours for others because we expected to get something back in return.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Try not to get angry or frustrated if a goal you are aiming to reach seems to be further away than ever. Just as there is a reason for everything that happens in life so too is there a reason for everything that does not happen. **SALLY BROMPTON**

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.

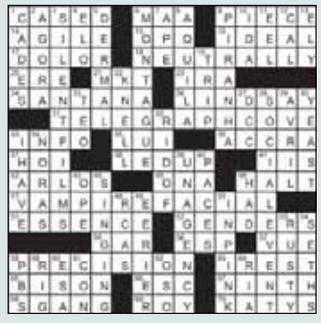
BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



Across
1. Niagara Falls' Maid of the __
5. Angry arfer's admonition
9. Dull
13. Wine: __ Spumante
14. Donnie Iris song: "Ah! __!"
15. Accustom
16. Toronto: The __ __ __ Theatre (Opened in 1993, it was named after a member of The Royal Family)
19. Reclined
20. Couplet
21. Antacid brand
22. House kind
24. Herb that sounds like a toast spread
26. Interest __
27. __ __ roll
29. Nero's 54
30. __-bitty
31. Newfoundland's nickname, The __
33. Broom closet items
36. "O Sole __"
37. "The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills" cast member who is Canadian producer David Foster's wife
39. Cdn. capital
41. Norway's capital
43. Rhyme scheme
44. Indebted person
45. Retro albums, e.g.
47. Spinning stat.
48. Reality's Ms. Leakes
49. Peter of HBO's "Game of Thrones"
53. About [abbr.]
55. A bus driver follows one, for short
56. Cobbler's tool
57. Switchblade
58. "Chasing the Sunset" band from Winnipeg: 2 wds.
64. Hotel employee
65. God: French
66. Mackerel sort
67. Their __ Were Watching God (1937 novel by #51-Down)
68. Chick containers
69. Trans-Canada, et al.

Down
1. Location locator
2. Medit. locale
3. Spikes
4. Sarah Palin impersonator: 2 wds.
5. Manitoba village, home of tourist attraction Sara the Camel
6. __ judicata (Settled court matter)
7. __ al-Khaimah, Middle East emirate
8. Valerie Harper title role
9. Genetic info carrier
10. Geometry set item
11. Field
12. Broom-of-twigs
15. "Letters from __ __" (2006) directed by Clint Eastwood
17. Spy org.
18. Roll up a flag
22. Ladylike
23. 3.14, for example
24. Ghastly
25. Lacto-__ vegetarian
28. 'The Big Easy'
32. Start to 'sack' (Hiker's bag)
34. __-Pine Falls, Manitoba
35. Office item, __ pad
37. Brand of yogurt
38. Syria's capital
40. Famed dino
42. Currency in Albania
44. Singing the right note in music: 2 wds.
46. Cut
49. Ambition
50. "Be that as __ __..."
51. Author, Zora __ Hurston
52. Wooded spot's open space
54. Greek letter
59. Some stoves
60. Fix
61 Edmonton International Airport code
62 'Trick' suffix
63. Boat's distress

Yesterday's Crossword



Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

					9	7		
			2	4		3		
3	4	9				1		
5			1		8		9	
	9						3	
	7		9		5			4
		2				6	7	3
		3		6	2			
		8	5					

Yesterday's Sudoku

1	2	5	7	3	6	8	4	9
3	9	7	1	8	4	6	2	5
8	6	4	2	9	5	7	3	1
4	7	3	6	1	8	5	9	2
5	8	9	3	4	2	1	7	6
6	1	2	5	7	9	3	8	4
2	3	1	4	6	7	9	5	8
9	4	6	8	5	3	2	1	7
7	5	8	9	2	1	4	6	3

Today
11°/7°
Variable

Friday
13°/7°
Variable

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26310 Fraser Hwy.

Burnaby
Brentwood Town Centre
Crystal Mall
Lougheed Mall
Metropolis at Metrotown
3855 Henning Dr.
4501 North Rd.
4711 Kingsway

Coquitlam
Coquitlam Centre
Westwood Mall
1071 Austin Ave.

Delta
Scottsdale Centre
1517 56th St.
4841 Delta St.
4912 62nd St.

Langley
Willowbrook Mall
8700 200th St.
19638 Fraser Hwy.
20159 88th Ave.
20202 66th Ave.

Maple Ridge
Haney Place Mall
22661 Lougheed Hwy.

Mission
Junction Shopping Centre
32670 Lougheed Hwy.

New Westminster
Royal City Centre

North Vancouver
Capilano Mall
Lynn Valley Centre
1295 Marine Dr.
1801 Lonsdale Ave.

Pitt Meadows
19800 Lougheed Hwy.

Port Coquitlam
2020 Oxford Connector

Richmond
Lansdowne Mall
Richmond Centre
11686 Steveston Hwy.

Surrey
Central City Mall
Cloverdale Crossing Shopping Centre
Grandview Corners
Guildford Town Centre
Semiahmoo Shopping Centre
3189 King George Blvd.
7380 King George Blvd.
13734 104th Ave.

Vancouver
Oakridge Centre
Pacific Centre
Terasen Centre
220 East 1st Ave.
551 Robson St.
808 Davie St.
991 Denman St.
1095 West Pender St.
1855 Burrard St.
2338 Cambie St.
2372 West 4th Ave.
2706 Granville St.
2748 Rupert St.
2749 Main St.
3121 West Broadway

West Vancouver
Park Royal North
Park Royal South

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